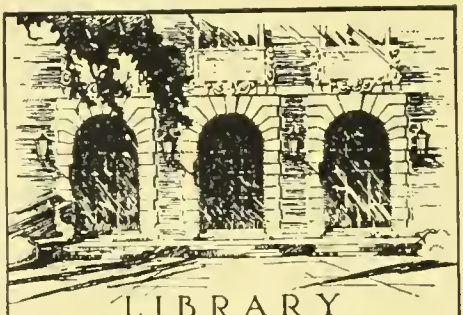
Wooers and Winners

Mrs G. Linnæus Banks



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WOOERS AND WINNERS;

OR,

UNDER THE SCARS.

VOL. I.

WOOERS AND WINNERS;

OR,

UNDER THE SCARS.

A Yorkshire Story.

BY

MRS. G. LINNÆUS BANKS

AUTHOR OF

"THE MANCHESTER MAN,"
"GOD'S PROVIDENCE HOUSE,"
&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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WOOERS AND WINNERS.

CHAPTER I.

AB INITIO.

IN all the land there is no district more romantic and picturesque than that section of the West Riding of Yorkshire where the great Pennine chain is broken up into rugged grandeur and beauty by what is known to geologists as the "Craven fault."

It has been so much the fashion for seekers of the picturesque to rush to the Continent in search of it that it is questionable whether, barring the geologists, the parish of Giggleswick was not a terra incognita to all but a few antiquaries, artists,

and anglers, a scholar here and there, and traders in lime, yarn, or cattle, until very recent days. But now that the word *Settle*, in bold characters on railway placards, stares the summer excursionist in the face from dead walls and hoardings, it is probable that the irregular village in a nook of the road at the foot of the grey limestone scars, as well as the town overhung by craggy Castleberg, will see an influx of tourists of all sorts and conditions, and not a few of those vandals who chip off stalactites from caves, and write their unheroic names to deface the grander one Nature herself had written before their ancestors had names at all.

In times far remote in the mists of ages those limestone scars, now towering above a good high-road like a protective rampart, confronted a bold sea, or rose from out its depths, an agglomeration of marine concretions and mollusca.

But that must have been long æons before those Anglo-Saxon days when the Ebbing-and-Flowing well at their base suggested in its mysterious rise and fall a reason for

piety to found the Guglesvic church and parish, whither pilgrims might be drawn to witness a miracle, and—leave pious contributions for the rood-priest; those days, when more was known of St. Alkald, to whom the church is dedicated, than is known now, when we have to fall back on old records to establish the merest figments of ancient fact.

Thus it is we find that a certain Alice De Percy and her son, Allan De Morville, made a gift to Henry Pudsey of all the lands in Settle, and the church of Giggleswick. Again, we learn that in the reign of Stephen the church was appropriated to the cell of Finchale. Now, Finchale Abbey was founded by Hugh Pudsey, Bishop of Durham, who also dedicated a church at Bishop-Middleham to St. Alkald, and there the saint is represented in a stained glass window as a female being cruelly strangled with a kerchief by two men. And thus by induction we arrive at the two facts, that the St. Alkald, to whom Giggleswick parish was dedicated was a woman

and a martyr, and therewith must rest content.

Obscure and out-of-the-way as this village, hid amongst the crags and wolds of old Craven, must have been when roads were few and wilds were trackless, some importance unknown to us must have attached to it, or to the well from which it presumably owed its origin, for in the reign of Henry VII. the little Anglo-Saxon church needed expansion or restoration, or something of the kind, and the existing long-bodied stone edifice, with a square tower and square windows, rose on its site. And then, or later, there must have been a goodly congregation to make a gallery a necessity. And art must have been latent in the pious worshippers, or the two-decked oaken pulpit would never have displayed those curious panels symbolic of the twelve tribes, said to have been carved by the rude dalesmen in the long evenings of winter. Something there must have been of more than common import about this sequestered dale, whether of priestly or lordly influence,

or popular superstition, else wherefore should Edward VI. in his short reign have left his royal signet on the spot in the charter of a Grammar School? And wherefore should that school be free and open to the children of the *wide world*, if the world knew nothing of the site?

Know nothing of the site! Think you that he who first discovered in the dense forest that marvel of a well which would in a few minutes fill and empty, rise and fall, many feet or few, without apparent cause, and who gave to the well a patron saint and a church, meant the marvel to be unknown? The halo round the head of St. Alkald would thenceforth shine above the well, and brightest when the night of ignorance was deepest. No sage had then dreamed of "natural syphons," or traced the mystery to a scientific cause. And much as our "Lady of Lourdes" attracts the multitude in these days, so would the fame of that ebbing-and-flowing well increase; and so to that mysterious well under the scars may be traced, not only the name

of the parish of Giggleswick (which holds Settle in its arms), but of its ancient church aud its grammar school, chartered for the behoof of the world.

And as church, school, and village, with their pertainings, may be said to have bubbled up out of that well in lapse of ages, so by analogy may this story I am simply putting to paper have bubbled up from its depths also, for thereabouts it had its rise.

The Skipton coach was late on the evening of Saturday, the 6th of February, 1830, and to one impatient traveller it seemed later than it really was. He had left Boar Lane, Leeds, at six in the morning, in a brisk, clear, sharp frost, which made his young blood tingle, and inspired a contempt for the indulgence of an inside seat.

So he mounted to the box-seat beside the coachman, who was an old acquaintance, and being well wrapped up in a thick drab cloth overcoat, which came to his heels, and had a small cape to cover his shoulders (almost a counterpart of the coachman's

own), having his legs cased in Wellington boots, and in his pockets, by way of reserve, a pair of woollen gloves and a warm muffatee, both knitted by kind sisterly fingers; he seemed to have made a sensible choice, although he had a long ride before him, and no cheery prospect at the far end.

Allan Earnshaw was at that age when youth aspires to be something more than boy, and yet has the consciousness that manhood has not even dawned. There is nothing more plucky or manly than the boy of fifteen, if he has right aspirations within him, and has not been coddled; and he would have felt it womanish to don his muffler and gloves, had not the coachman given him a hint in the business-like way he wound a shawl round his own throat, and drew on his fleecy-lined leather gauntlets.

Equally unmanly would he have thought it to let the load of anxiety on his young heart be seen, so the man launched out into themes of his own, touching every now and then on topics familiar to both, in the days —not so long past—when Allan had been a

Giggleswick scholar, ready to join in a "Whoop, hurrah!" as the stage bowled off from the "Hart's Head," along the high road, and on under the scars, until the dust or the mist shut it from sight of the lads seated on the stile across which lay the way to the Grammar School.

Sharp and exhilarating the air, dry and hard the roads, out of which the horses' hoofs struck fiery sparks, as they dashed along, with barely a flick of the long whip. But as those hoofs trod down the miles, and other horses took their place, change seemed to come with the change of steeds. There was a yellow aspect in the sky overhead at Otley, then a fine, powdery snow-dust sifted down, and soon they were in the midst of whirling flakes, and the nearer they drew to Ilkley the deeper lay the snow, in the hollows and on the high moorlands, thick and white, and the little beck, which at that date ran uncovered through the one straggling street, was swollen and turbulent. It was hard work then for the panting steeds, for the snow clogged the wheels, and the pas-

sengers had to alight here and there to help the heavy vehicle through the drifts, at which there was some grumbling and growling on the part of one or two comfortable and burly insiders, and stronger language than was at all necessary; but a middle-aged man, whose shaggy eyebrows caught the falling snow, shamed them out of their inaction by his own energy of speech and manner.

"Come, come, my friends," cried he, "oaths are lame horses; push along with a will. Jupiter didn't help the waggon out of the rut till the waggoner put his own strength to the wheel."

"That's right, my lad, never loiter when there's a duty to be done," addressing Allan, who had come from the back of the coach to grasp the spokes of the fore-wheel, the speaker having breast and hands against the hind one. "Pull away, boy, with a will; there are little flakes as well as big ones in the sum-total of this drift. Combination does it, and no good effort's ever wholly lost; wholly, I say, my lad; remember that.

And remember, too, that little faults and little vices are like snow-flakes—they may be soft and small, but they heap up insidiously till they choke the road of life."

His words had poured forth in a continuous stream, only checked by the involuntary grunts which ever accompany pushing and straining, and now, as if to verify his motto that "no good effort's wholly lost," their combined efforts set the coach free, and the wheels had a roll of their own.

"Tak' your pleaces, gen'lemen, an' thenk ye!" cried Joe Barnes, the coachman, over the folds of his muffler. There was a general scramble outside and in, the horses set off again over the snowy ground, and the travellers, whose blood had been set in circulation by the exercise, found example contagious, and their tongues in motion, too.

At first the conversation was confined to the snowfall, with its possible duration, and consequent effect on traffic and the markets, with uncomfortable fears that Skipton market would be half over before they got

there, at the snail's pace they were going. Then two or three burly individuals, of the wealthy farmer and grazier type, launched into questions of crops and fleeces, oxen and heifers, in so broad a vernacular, and so exclusive a technicality, that even our earnest friend of the shaggy eyebrows had no room to edge in a word. But there being indications that another stoppage was imminent, a loud execration on delay called forth a remonstrance from him, in which he was seconded by another passenger hitherto silent, a stout man about thirty, and this led to discourse on the railroad then in course of construction between Liverpool and Manchester, and, supposing the trial proved steam locomotion feasible, the advantages that would result to the trade of the county if such iron roads could be introduced into Yorkshire.

He was a draper, he said, in York, and could lay in his stock with much more advantage if he could visit the warehouses and see goods in the piece, instead of ordering them from scraps in a traveller's pattern-

book; drapery looked so very different in the piece and in the pattern. As things were at present, he should lose all his time in coming and going. He hoped, for the sake of trade, that the railroad experiment would succeed and spread over the country.

He of the eyebrows, who confessed to having also a commercial interest at stake, agreed with the draper so far, when the three cattle-dealers broke into the discussion with loud-voiced dissent, protesting vehemently that the country would be ruined and done for, and the horse become an extinct animal if steam-carriage became general.

They were already waxing hot and angry in the debate when there was a second stoppage, and again shoulders, broad and slim alike, had to be brought to bear on the vehicle before it could be set going; no matter who grumbled or who did not.

Again the earnest voice of the energetic passenger was heard to enunciate the axiom, "No good effort's *w*holly lost!" his peculiar

and emphatic pronunciation of the *wh*olly rendering it all the more impressive.

"Who is that active old gentleman with the loose dark top-coat, and comforter all awry," asked Allan of the coachman, when they were again on the box-seat.

"Him!" exclaimed Jehu. "Ah thowt iverybody omoast i' th' West Ridin' knaw'd honist John. Bud thah't bud a younker" (patronizingly). "Weel, Maister Wilson travels like i' th' oil or varnish line, bud whither fur hissen or ither foak ah can't reetly mak aht. He nivver talks ov his ahn bizziness, tho' he hez th' gift o' th' gab; na, nor ither foaks' bizziness noather. Bud he's chock full o' wise saayin's from buiks, an' nivver loses a chance ov doin' a good turn, or saayin' a good word iv it cums in his waay. An' he's fur eddication, an' saays iverybody aht to be able to wroite his naame, an' to read th' Bible, an' ah think he's abaght reet, tho' *ah've* nivver mich toime fur readin' onnything."

"And where does this Mr. Wilson hail from, eh, Joe?"

"Oh, Rippon way; bud ah taks Honist John up heer, theer, and iverywheer alung t' road, bud he's allays th' saame—upreet an' downreet, and whativer he saays ither foak may sweear by!" And Joe cracked his whip with a flourish, at once to emphasise his testimony to a good man's worth and to stimulate his flagging steeds, from beneath whose hoofs the powdery snow flew up in emulation of the steam which rose from their flanks.

But the snow—which had been falling, falling, nearly all the way from Otley, capping bushes, trees, and boulders with delicate white hoods, spreading a fleecy mantle over the moors, and a swansdown trimming, as it were, atop of each hedge or stone wall; which had covered the oiled sheet protecting the piled-up luggage on the coach top until it looked like a huge cake fresh from some giant confectioner's—appeared to grow thinner and lighter as they neared Skipton, and when the four panting horses were drawn up suddenly in front of the "Devonshire Arms" they had left the storm behind them.

Ostlers, summoned by the guard's far-sounding horn, were in readiness to release the steaming beasts, to open the coach doors, and affix ladders for the convenient descent of timid outsiders, who stamped their feet and shook the snow from their shoulders when they alighted on terra firma. The guard unlocked the boot (a sort of cupboard at the back), and dragged thence such parcels and luggage as had reached their destination. Coachman and guard held out their hands for their fees, and then the companions of a few brief hours dispersed, cramped, cold, and hungry; the majority, including John Wilson and Allan Earnshaw, turned for warmth and refreshment towards the inn, glowing with cheerful fires, and redolent with savoury odours. A few, whose journey was ended, or whose business was more imperative than appetite, set off at a brisk pace their several ways; and amongst them the unpretentious draper from York, who, with a carpet-bag labelled "George Hudson" in his hand, hurried towards the High Street, jostling against

Allan and others in his haste, but as unnoted in appearance, and as dreamless as they of any link in their lives, any remote influence he might have on their future fortunes, or on the welfare of the nation at large.

CHAPTER II.

HONEST JOHN.

STANDING on the broad, flat step in front of the inn door when the coach drove up, and in striking contrast to the carelessly-attired John Wilson, who brushed past him, was a trim, speckless gentleman, considerably above middle age, who still adhered to the fashion of an earlier date. For instance, he wore low shoes tied with an elaborate bow of black silk ferret, his beaver hat was lower in the crown and broader in the brim than was the mode; the upper portion of his swallow-tailed coat was covered by a high-collared spencer, tightly-buttoned across the chest, but not so

wholly as to conceal his broad shirt-frill of fine French cambric, or his ample white neckcloth, above which rose the points of a stiff linen collar, in which his smoothly-shaven, dimpled chin was almost buried. His lower limbs were encased in small-clothes, or breeches, buckled below the knee, where they were met by cloth gaiters, of the same dark iron-grey as the rest of his suit; and pendent from his watch-fob, and a heavy steel chain, was a massive bunch of seals, which the spencer (a mere coat without tails) did not come low enough to cover.

At one time his hair must have been what is called "sandy," and inclined to be bushy, but it was somewhat thinning on the temples and on the crown; his strips of whisker were mere shadows, and there was a slight sprinkling of life's snow upon it, which gave it a cooler tint; but his cheeks were fresh-coloured, as of old; his lips, though rather thin and close-set, could break into a pleasant smile which irradiated his whole face, and, though crow-feet were then seen by

the corners of his eyes, the eyes themselves twinkled and sparkled, as keenly alert as the firm step and ready hand advanced to meet those of Allan Earnshaw when he crossed the open space between the coach and the inn, which stood a little back from the line of the street.

"You are late, young gentleman. The coach is monstrously behind time. Here have I been kept cooling my heels for a couple of hours—there or thereabouts," he corrected himself, "to save an old woman a fit of the fidgets," but there was something in the humorous twist of the lips and the twinkle of the eyes which belied the semi-rancour of the speech.

"I suppose you mean Aunt Statham, Mr. Proctor," answered the youth, as he responded to the warm grasp of the other. "I did not know she expected me. Surely mother must be worse than Edith implied, if Aunt Statham has been written to!" and a shadow of alarm swept like a wave over his open countenance.

"Now don't jump to hasty conclusions

on slight premises. There is no reason to alarm yourself unnecessarily in any way or shape. You know the good old lady is tenacious of respect, and had you been allowed to pass through Skipton without previous intimation to her, there would be the very what's-his-name to pay; and I suppose your father, like a sensible man, sent a line as a precaution."

"Did *he* write?" exclaimed Allan. "Then I had best run off to Aunt Statham's at once and ascertain——"

"No, you won't," said the elder, detaining him by the arm. "You will come into the 'Devonshire Arms' and have a good dinner before the hungry wolves devour it all; and do not let despondency spoil your appetite. When Mrs. Statham has a cold she swathes herself in flannel, doses herself with hot drinks, gruel, yarrow, and what not; and is never visible to mortal but Deborah, until she emerges from the flannels, and has her newly-curled front and mob cap in becoming order. My boy,"—he saw Allan's impatience—"your aunt would not see you.

Deb came this morning to desire that I would convey the regret of her mistress to you, and say she was alike unable to receive a visit or to leave the house."

"But, Mr. Proctor——" in a tone of remonstrance.

"But, Master Allan," and the tips of the long, slender fingers came down on the young shoulders with a quiet decision which did not admit of demur, and so turned him towards the travellers' room, where a huge fire was blazing, and viands disappearing from two long tables with astonishing rapidity. It was market day, and hungry customers came and went noisily, with little regard to order or precedence.

Mr. Proctor (or Lawyer Proctor, as he was called in the town) only removed his hands when he had seated his young friend in front of a Yorkshire pie, which seemed to have stood as long a siege as Skipton Castle, and yet remained a pie, and a substantial one. At his call a buxom waitress, whose head was all cap, curls, and ribbons, filled a couple of long tallboy glasses with

ale, which they called "stingo," and Allan Earnshaw having turned to the cheer with good will, in spite of his anxieties, the gentleman of the breeches and spencer rubbed the palms of his hands together up and down briskly, as if in self-satisfaction that he had got over a disagreeable business better than he expected. He had no mind that the young fellow should know the contents of the letter to Mrs. Statham.

"Why," he asked himself, "should he meet sorrow half-way? Some diseases are like chancery suits,—and Mrs. Thorpe's is one of them,—last a lifetime before they kill. He may find matters at home better than he expects."

Holding this theory, he kept up a flow of small talk, not so lively as to jar, yet sufficient to keep Allan from gloomy introspection, in the course of which he made some reference to the firm of woolbrokers with whom Allan had been placed, and their clerks, into whose company the youth was likely to be thrown.

As the words "Metcalfe and Polloc" left

his fluent lips, and were answered by Allan as readily, "Oh! the new clerk is named Buttermere, Basil Buttermere," a knife and fork almost opposite to Allan dropped suddenly with a clatter, and he, looking up, beheld the keen grey eyes of the sententious traveller, named John Wilson, peering at him from under their shaggy brows, with a glance at once searching and troubled.

"The gentleman in unbrushed black opposite to us, with his neck-cloth all awry, seems to regard you very attentively, Allan. Do you know him?" put Mr. Proctor, in an undertone.

"Joe Barnes calls him Honest John——" began Allan, in a like key.

"Honest John!" ejaculated the lawyer, under his breath. "And is that Honest John? that man of loose joints and loose garments! Who would think what lay beneath that weather-beaten countenance of his? How he has changed! No wonder. It was a rascally piece of business altogether. I should like to shake hands with him, if it would not recall unpleasant mem-

ories. But perhaps he has forgotten me."

Apparently he had, for his eyes had gone back to his plate, and he appeared to have no thought for anything beyond it and the knife and fork, which were once more occupied with a slice of sirloin.

Yet Josiah Proctor, in outward appearance his very antithesis, was a man to be remembered, not merely because the fashion of his garb had been unchanged for many years, but because the two had many points in common. If the one was nimble, quick, alert even to jerkiness, and the gait of the other somewhat loose and shambling, they were alike fluent, energetic, genial; but the lawyer could laugh, laugh with his whole face. John Wilson, however beaming and benignant, was never known to smile. If he did remember the lawyer he sat soberly silent, called for his reckoning when he had finished his meal, resumed the dark overcoat he had laid aside, and, taking a japanned sample-case in his hand, quitted the room with merely "Good afternoon" to his young travelling companion.

It was no use for Allan to be impatient; the market-coach would not start until the market was over and the passengers ready; and the snow-blocked roads, which had made them late in coming, would be held accountable. Mr. Proctor, to fill up the time, took him by the arm and strolled with him through the Market-place, calling at his own office to put questions and give instructions to a clerk almost as old-fashioned as himself, and never left his charge until he saw him seated on the box again beside the red-faced coachman.

There was snow on the ground, and on the bare, quick-set hedges and scattered trees for the first few miles of their way; then a sharp shower of sleet drove in their faces, but it ceased about seven o'clock, when the moon came out. It was obscured at times by a swiftly-scudding rack, still there was light enough to reveal the stone walls mapping out the high moorlands as they approached Settle, and to demonstrate that the downfall there had not been snow. There were rain pools and runnels in the

roadway on which the rays of the coach-lamps shimmered in advance, as they also shimmered on the window-panes of roadside cottages and grey houses of millstone grit, which, at first straggling, ranged in closer rank as they entered the town at the south-east, and, sweeping round a curve, drew up at the "Golden Lion" to change horses and passengers. There was another start, at a rattle, due west, through the long main street, and past the ancient market-place which opened out on the right, with a quaint old cross and market-house standing in the midst, under the shadow of Castleberg—that mountain steep which was once a dial to rival that of Ahaz, and which still, with fir-clad skirt, uprears its lofty head and grandly frowns on shops and dwellings at its base. There were lights flitting about, showing where streets diverged, and where shops were closing, for the Giggleswick church clock struck the hour of curfew as they left the inn, and, with the last stroke, the pealing bell rang out as it had rung since first St. Alkald's had a bell to ring

in deference to law and custom. Settle church had then no existence.

Country people wending homewards, lantern in hand, called out familiarly to the coachman, to be answered heartily, as they dashed along the open road, where houses became few and trees many, and Castleberg's towering hill still held them in its shade, until nearing the bridge, now crossing it, Ribblesdale opened out its romance and beauty on the right, in spite of the prosaic cotton-mill close at hand, whilst far away to the left spread a fertile valley with the noisy river coursing to the south, glittering in the moonlight for an instant, then lost to sight as they whirled onwards, alternately in light and shade as the scudding clouds swept onwards too. The "Parish Umbrella," too bare and leafless to justify its title, was left behind, then the end of Stackhouse-road was passed at a gallop down the steep incline known as Bell Hill; then midway there was a pull at the reins, the horses turned at an angle northwards, and in another minute stopped in front of the "White Hart Inn."

They had reached Giggleswick. The northward road lay before them, white and glittering in the rays of the moon. Fiddlecase field showed obscurely to the right, with Kelcoe Wood, the dark flounce of the grey limestone scars in shadow beyond. But Allan was more interested in the village grouping round the church in the hollow, at the back of the "White Hart," than in scars or wood, or even in the old Grammar School, lying low in the meadows opposite to the Fiddlecase, with its front to the church and its back to Cateral Hall grounds, which skirted the road under the opposing lines of moor and scar.

Even before the coach was prepared to start afresh, Allan and his valise were on their way back a few score yards, and, turning sharply to his right down the steep declivity of Bell Hill, where stood the chief houses of the village. He was hurrying along past the old stone cross (the ancient rood) as speedily as young feet can, and was about to take a final plunge round the corner of the church which, elevated above

a narrow lane, looked down upon his home, when a loud shriek pierced the ear of silence, and a man, who seemed to precipitate himself headlong down the churchyard steps, rushed wildly past him, almost overturning him as he shot forward and was lost in the gloom of the unlighted village.

CHAPTER III.

A MOTHER'S CARE FOR HER CHILD.

TWO centuries have flown since the mill-stone-grit was quarried, and hewn, and brought together for the construction of the curiously-shaped building in which Archibald Thorpe had his dwelling, right under the shade of St. Alkald's Church. And the winds and rains of two centuries have beaten down on its low-pitched flagstone roof and solid walls, toning their tints and smoothing their angles; and at least a hundred years have gone in the growth of the ivy that covers it.

But, indeed, the old edifice at Ivy-fold was an angle,—two sides of a square, best indicated by the letter L, of which the two

extreme ends were the gables. The upper one came flush with the lane beneath the churchyard wall, significantly designated Love Lane; the other overlooked the level where Bell Hill ended, and Tarn Lane began to rise. The building, bearing date 1669 over the main doorway, had at some time been divided into three, a slice at each gable-end serving as a cottage for other occupants, the doors of which did not presume to come to the front, where a small garden, or court, within a low wooden fence, filled up a vacancy and the square plot of land. Consequently, Mr. Thorpe's domicile comprehended more than two-thirds of the whole, itself an L square, with windows overlooking a pasturage at the back, and the forecourt and the church at the front. The heavy iron-studded door, with thick, ring-shaped knocker, and a drop handle, like a smaller knocker, was in the corner opposite to the church, and from this a flagged walk ran under the best kitchen window to a small wooden gate opening into Love Lane.

It was by no means a large abode, having only a ground floor and another above, but, being oddly shaped without, you may be sure it was peculiarly constructed within.

No doubt, in olden time, when the fireplace was a spacious open ingle wherein gossips might sit together on winter nights, the front door opened directly into the living-room or "house," corresponding to the baronial hall. The kitchen door, close beside, did the same, and the staircase, which planted its foot at that kitchen door, ran boldly upwards, clinging to its wall. But the early years of this century reversed a good many primitive notions; people with any pretentions to gentility, even in country villages, began to think of privacy and comfort, and doubtless at the time the fireplace was bricked up and supplied with an ordinary grate, it was that the oaken partition was put up to screen both doors and staircase within an enclosure of their own, and to add to the warmth of the large apartment, thenceforth called a parlour; the kitchen where the family meals were

taken becoming the "*house*." The partition had also created a recess, not more than four feet square, in which was a small diamond-paned window overlooking the court, and of course it held a window-seat.

Anyone coming in from the staircase, the kitchen, or the front door, would enter by the new door in the partition, but be as unseen by the occupant of the window-seat as that occupant would be by the incomer. The room was, however, well lit from the opposite side by two square windows, the sills of which were almost on a level with the field, and, as a protection against cattle, barriers of iron rods, somewhat similar to nursery fireguards, had been placed outside, as also to a third window lighting a small room beyond, which had a raised wooden floor, and was entered by a door in the extreme corner. A room devoted to Mr. Thorpe.

In neither room did the carpet cover more than the centre of the floor, which was oak, and polished. Mrs. Thorpe, like

other good Yorkshire housewives, would have been shocked to think of the dust which must accumulate under a carpet too large to be lifted frequently for sweeping and shaking. Yet the rooms were well furnished—that is, solidly furnished—oak preponderated over mahogany; the book-case, which fronted the fireplace, and the square piano between the windows being the chief exceptions. The chairs were many shaped, some with tall stiff backs, others roomy and cushioned like the great chintz-covered sofa.

The best kitchen or "house," over which one Janet Carr presided, was as large as the family room, with such another old fire-place, an oven and grate that looked as if they were made for cooking, whilst on the side overlooking the court, and between door and fireplace, a long low window shed light on a white kitchen-table and all need-ful operations. Deep cupboards or presses filled up the spaces on either side the ample chimney; whilst confronting the broad win-dow stood the door of a second and smaller

kitchen, where the rough work of the household was done out of sight and hearing. This again had an outlet into the open air, where across a vacant space lay a garden for fruits and vegetables.

As a token alike of hospitality and butchers at a distance, from the ceiling of the larger kitchen depended bags of dried herbs, two or three hams, a piece of hung beef, a flitch of bacon, and strings of yellow onions; whilst over the hearth (where an iron fender shone like steel), there was suspended a square wooden frame, or bread-fleack, crossed with parallel lines of twine, over which fresh oat-cakes or haver-bread flapped or grew crisp in the air and warmth.

There was one drawback to this attractive kitchen, at least to a modern notion. From one corner a closet appeared to be partitioned off. Nothing of the kind—it was only a box-bed such as may be found here and there in the north to this day, shut in from prying eyes.

The chambers above scarcely correspond-

ed with the apartments below. The solitary flight of stairs terminated with one square flat, whence ran a sort of balustraded gallery parallel with the stairs, from which doors on the right hand admitted to three successive rooms, overlooking the pasturage. The gallery itself ended in a broad, square space, lit by a small window, corresponding to the one in the recess below. And close by this window another door, painted brown like the rest, opened into the one large chamber of the dwelling. From its wide, low, transome window could be seen not only the grassy court below, but the church gate and steps, with glimpses of the sycamores and gravestones in "God's acre," and a portion of the village. A light in the room would therefore shine out like a beacon through the night to any home-comer; whilst anyone seated at the staircase window could watch the gate and the south side of the elevated churchyard, although the school-house and the side of the church *it* confronted were quite out of sight, and beyond range to the north.

Now, impatient reader—you, I mean, who have skipped all this "dry description"—oblige me by turning back and reading it carefully. I have been at some pains to describe an actual habitation, so as to make events transpiring therein thoroughly intelligible. Do not defeat my good intentions.

There had been a light burning nightly in Mrs. Thorpe's room for many weary weeks, shining out into the darkness with a proclamation of prolonged pain and hope deferred; and neighbours out after nightfall would glance upwards and shake their heads, and none more ominously than Solomon Bracken, the old sexton, who, going to and fro on bell-ringing duty, was wont to rub his sharp Roman nose between his thumb and forefinger, and mutter, "It can't be mich langer, it can't; that's suer an' sartain!"

So he said, with his wheezy croak, for at least the twentieth time, when he put his foot on the first of the old worn steps to the churchyard, on the night of Saturday, February the 6th, 1830 (a memorable date

in his calendar), as he glanced upwards and saw the flickering firelight through the panes, and a face pressed against them, as if peering into the night. There being no opposite neighbours to overlook any chamber in the house, the linen blinds were seldom lowered, and the inquiring young face was distinctly visible over the short muslin curtain. Again he shook his bent head as he mounted the top step, and repeated, "It can't be lang, puir lass, puir lass!"

Lying on a four-post bed, hung with the whitest of dimity, in that room with the whitest of whitewashed walls and ceiling, the whitest of covers on mahogany drawers and dressing-table, under a white counterpane of her own knitting, beat with feeble pulsations the heart of a suffering mother, whose face was the whitest thing in the room, or her patient little nurse thought so, a girl on whom a heavy responsibility had been that day laid.

"I leave Dora in your charge, Edith dear," the mother had said. "You are very young, too young, in fact, to be bur-

dened with the care of a delicate and wayward child, but you are a good, steady girl, and I know I can depend on you to do your best for your little sister when I am gone."

The poor creature spoke with an effort it gave her daughter pain to witness.

"Indeed, indeed, you may, mother," she answered, with genuine fervour, albeit her voice was subdued, as all sounds there had need to be. "But you should not speak in this way, mother, you are better, much better. Only this morning Dr. Burrow said there was no immediate danger."

"No immediate danger! Oh, my love, but *I* know better than Dr. Burrow that the messenger is nigh at hand. Nay, do not sob so heavily, my dear Edith, I am a great sufferer, and long for a release. Were my life prolonged it would only be with a continuance of intolerable pain to myself and—and an increase of trouble and anxiety to all."

Pain stopped the speaker's utterance, whilst the effort to stifle her suffocating sobs rendered almost inaudible the daughter's

protest that it was "no trouble to wait on her, and no one thought so!"

A dissenting movement of the invalid's head brought Edith closer to re-adjust the pillow on which the blanched cheek rested. The pillow was plump, the cheek worn and sunken with years of suffering, as was the attenuated hand which closed with all a dying mother's intensified affection on the small one so prompt yet gentle in its care.

A clock in the kitchen gave warning with a hoarse burr.

"It is time you had your medicine, mother," said the young attendant, releasing the thin hand after responding to its pressure. Turning to a neatly-arranged table near the window, she selected one from several bottles, poured out the potion into a wine-glass, after careful measurement, and returned to the bedside as the house clock began to strike, and its strokes were drowned by the heavier hammer of the church time-teller close at hand.

"What o'clock is that?" inquired the patient, wearily.

"Six."

"I suppose Allan will not be here yet awhile?" resumed Mrs. Thorpe, with a sigh.

"It is Saturday, the coach will not be in until seven, so he cannot be here earlier, even if he got my letter in time."

There was a pause.

"Where is your father?"

"He was playing see-saw with Dora by the fire when I came up."

"Ah! he is a kind father—but he may marry again, and then——" The half soliloquy stopped.

Edith, having replaced the medicine-glass and bottle in order, resumed her seat by the bed-side, and took up a sock she was knitting, and the dropped thread of conversation, together.

"What then, mother? You do not think he could ever be anything but kind. He is so very fond of Dora, too," urged she, with a stronger emphasis on the *very* than she was conscious of.

"True, Edith; but if—if—— A step-mother would make a great difference—she

might not—— Edith, my dear child, promise me to be to Dora a faithful guardian. Do not let her miss a mother's care; teach her—direct her—let your own example lead her to goodness; be as much a mother to her as an elder sister can.—Poor child, she is a tender plant—a rough blast or rough usage would kill her." She paused, then, after a panting interval, resumed, "Give me your word, Edith, to shield my little darling from sorrow or suffering, and —my mind will be at rest," and there was an eager look in the sunken eyes as she fixed them on the girl's sad face.

"You need not fret about the lile barn" (little child), "mother, we all love her so well. Whatever comes, she will be taken good care of, I am sure. But you are tiring yourself with talking—do try to sleep; doctor will be so cross."

"I cannot sleep, Edie. I am somehow more anxious about Dora to-day than ever. I think I grow more uneasy as the time draws nigher. Sometimes I feel myself —wishing I could take my barn with me

—and then—then I pray to be forgiven the wicked thought. You are but—a child yourself, Edie, yet you are old enough to remember your mother, and Dora will forget me before she can read the name on my grave. Do promise to take care of her as you both grow up, and let no trouble come anigh her that you can prevent. Promise me *that,* my dear—and I—shall feel resigned."

There had been a brave effort on the girl's part to overcome emotion that was choking her. It was an almost inarticulate voice that answered, "If my promise will make you more comfortable, I give it willingly. I will take all the care of Dora that one sister can take of another. But Aunt Statham has always promised that her namesake shall never want a friend, and surely she will keep her word."

"I am sure *you* will keep *your* word. My aunt Statham is old and fanciful. She may break faith with me—you never will. *You* will take care of little Dora, I know. —Kiss me, Edie, that's a good girl.—God

bless you!—Now draw the curtains, I think I can sleep."

"Will not God take care of us best?" whispered the young girl, as she bent to the mother's kiss.

"Certainly—but even faith commits its dear ones to earthly charge as well as heavenly," adding, in a dreamy tone, "I wish Allan was here."

Edith unlooped the white dimity curtains which hung in full festoons round the tall, thin bed-posts; and, standing on tiptoe to prevent the brass rings rattling on the iron rods, drew the folds close. She stepped lightly across the room, and put her face close to the window, against which a thick February sleet was drifting; and as she looked out she murmured, "It is a bad night for Allan. I, too, wish he was here."

An almost inaudible sigh escaped her as she seated herself on a low stool in front of the fire, and looked dreamily into its red depths, as if there lay the solution of her long unspoken thought, "*Who* will take care of me? *I* am to care for Dora. Who is to care for me?"

There was a cricket chirping in the large kitchen beneath, and its shrill note sounded a blythe response, but the lone girl was too deeply wrapt in thought to heed its utterance. Ashes dropped from the fire on to the hearth; the sleet drove against the casement; the cricket shrilled its loudest, but she sat there silent and unheeding.

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE HOUR OF CURFEW.

EDITH EARNSHAW'S own father had for several years lain in the churchyard with the ancestors who had, one after another, held Ivy Fold. The father downstairs amusing his petted child was the father of Dora only; the second husband of her mother, and that mother lay on the bed from which she was never more to rise. A terrible internal malady had eaten into the life of poor Mrs. Thorpe, and slowly, surely, as the minute hand passed its shorter fellow on the dial, as the roots of fell disease struck deeper and deeper, so did the sands of life's hour-glass drop.

There was no doubt of her doom, either

in her own mind or the minds of others. Her years had been numbered, and the months, the weeks,—it was only doubtful whether days or hours would be added to their sum. If Dr. Burrow had not said it in so many words, it was implied when he suggested the propriety of writing to Leeds for her son, the Allan so anxiously expected.

Anxiously expected, indeed, by more than the mother. The pensive girl looking so mournfully into the fire, and musing over the maternal love which seemed to centre in her youngest child to the exclusion of her elder born; on the mental anxiety which dreaded partial orphanhood for one, forgetful that total orphanhood awaited the others; she, with a new sense of loneliness and pain, with an aching heart crushed beneath the burden newly laid upon it,—she yearned for her brother, and her brother's certain sympathy.

No wonder, for the child on whose shoulders the dying mother had unreflectingly cast the gravest cares of womanhood was herself not fourteen years of age. She was

already staid and thoughtful beyond her years, was calm and self-contained, and of a gentle and loving nature; but few guessed the depth of love in her young heart, for few had cared to plumb its depths.

Her mother's marriage with Mr. Thorpe had followed closely her own father's death. Mrs. Thorpe seldom referred to Mr. Earnshaw, and, but for his son and daughter, all that belonged to the dead had been dead too.

Mr. Thorpe, to do him justice, had been far from unkind to either of his step-children, but he had made no open demonstration of affection. It had not occurred to him that the eager schoolboy or the shy girl could have a possible blank in their lot, whilst they were well clad and cared for, had a fair supply of books and toys (as books and toys were in those days), and uttered no complaints. He never asked himself how it was that Allan was less mischievous than other boys of his age, or whence arose Edith's extreme quietude. That they missed a father's love, or yearned

for some token of parental affection, never dawned on his intelligence, not even when his own babe was born, and taught him what that mysterious and subtle feeling meant.

To a man of mature age, of scientific tastes and studious habits contracted long before his marriage, leading a somewhat monotonous life in a country village, the advent of a child was a golden era in existence, and "lile Dora," as she was called (though christened Theodora, at the instance of Mrs. Thorpe's rich aunt, Theodora Statham), was at once the sun in her sire's firmament, and penetrated his inmost heart.

At her birth five years before, Mrs. Thorpe's system sustained a shock from which she never properly rallied, and by the time the infant could fairly "go alone," her fatal disease made itself manifest. As the child grew the mother faded, but as the certainty of dissolution drew nearer the mother's love rose in proportion. With the pertinacity of the drowning, she clung to life for the sake of her children, or, rather, of her child.

She had herself married so very precipitately she could not flatter herself her second husband would remain long without a second wife, and worse than death was her dread lest her little one should fall into unkind or indifferent hands. Allan and Edith were sufficiently provided for, she reasoned, and old enough to maintain their ground against actual wrong; but her little Dora would have no one to care for her. The very supposition must have grown out of her inner consciousness, and yet she blindly and needlessly bound one child in fetters to the other for life.

Needlessly! Dora had been to Edith better than her doll; and a lonely child's doll *is loved.* She could dress and undress the doll, kiss, fondle, and give it her childish confidences; but it could neither smile nor kiss her in return. Dora could do both. True, Dora was spoiled, wayward, and petted, screamed and fought for her choicest girl-treasures; true, Dora filled the father's heart entirely, and two-thirds of the mother's; true, the caresses lavished on the

little one smote her painfully with a sense of unmerited neglect; but the child itself loved her, and that love was the one sunbeam on a somewhat cheerless path.

And there she sat on the low stool, looking dreamily and wistfully into the waning fire, that girl on the threshold of her fourteenth year; pondering, alone, mysteries of life and death such as have troubled the minds of abstract philosophers ere now. There she sat, hearing neither the dropping ash, nor the chirping cricket, nor the ticking clock, nor the sleet, wind-driven against the window panes; there she sat, contrasting her own loneliness in the present and the future, in that still and shadowy chamber, and the still more shadowy life beyond; contrasting it with the warmth and glow of the parlour, where the father had set his books aside to nurse and soothe with loving words a petulant child; loving words such as she seldom heard, and might never hear again. She had been exhorted to watch over Dora—everybody thought of Dora—no one thought of her, not even her mother.

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No one thought of her but Allan, and he lived so far away. She wished postage and paper did not cost so much, that she might write to him and hear from him oftener—she was so *very* lonely.

Just then a stray bat struck its claws into the wood-work of the mullioned window, and flapped its leathern wings against the glass, causing her to look round and shiver, as she recalled stories of its ominous import; but as her upturned eye came back it rested on an inscription rudely cut in the stone above the fireplace—

"*Nunquam solus quum solus.* Gideon Earnshaw. A.D. 1672."

"Ah!" she murmured, half audibly, "if Allan could but have translated all the meaning of that as easily as he translated the words, there might be some good in it. 'Never alone when alone.' It appears senseless to me, for I seem always alone even with people about me. I wish I could make it true to me as it must have been to the old Puritan whose name stands as a

witness to its truth. I am always alone. But perhaps he had plenty of friends to love him," and a heavy sigh was fitting commentary on the feeling which had shaped itself into words.

The burr-r-r-r of the clock warning for seven, followed by seven metallic strokes on its old cracked bell, and the seven sonorous beats of its big rival in the church tower, awoke the light sleeper in the bed, and the dreamer by the fire.

"Are you still there, Edith?" fell in faint tones on the ear of the girl.

She was on her feet in an instant.

"Yes, mother, can I do anything for you?"

"Nothing; are you alone?"

"Yes, quite alone," replied Edith, in some surprise.

"I thought I heard you speaking to some one?"

"Only to myself; I often do."

There was a pause. Then the mother broke the silence.

"Hush! Did I not hear the gate? I

hope that is Allan coming." An echo in the lonely heart said, "*I* hope so, too!" the ready answer of lip and foot was only "I fancy it is too soon. I will run and see."

As Edith descended the stairs, Janet Carr, their one domestic, opened the iron-studded door and let in a streak of moonlight and a gust of wind, so keen it chilled the sensitive frame fresh from the atmosphere above, and she shivered for the second time that night. "How cold it is," involuntarily exclaimed she, but superstition had set no evil omen down to a cutting wind, and, though it pierced her like a knife, she had no prescience and only pleasant words for him to whom that sharp blast was herald.

A boy's voice outside had its polite message brusquely interpreted by Janet, who still held the door half open.

"Oh, Jasper, is that you? Come in," and Edith put out her hand with a frank welcome, her face breaking into a smile, adding, "Mrs. Cragg is very kind; tell her I do not think my mother is any worse.

She has just wakened from a comfortable sleep. We thought it was Allan."

The boy, somewhere about her own age, who wore a dark cloth jacket and trousers, with a frill round his throat, doffed his cap when she appeared, and took the proffered hand, but did not step in.

"I must not stay, thank you, I have to be back for prayers," said he; then, abruptly, "Is Allan coming by to-night's coach?"

"We expect him. He has been sent for. Mother is growing very anxious."

The boy's face brightened in the moonlight.

"It is time the coach was in. I have not heard the horn yet, but, you see, Edith, if the wind blows the other way we don't always hear it. Suppose I run up and inquire? It won't take me a minute!" He had forgotten that he was bound to be in to prayers.

"Oh, if you would be so kind, Jasper, I should be——"

The gleam of moonlight was gone, and so was Jasper Ellis; off like a reindeer round by the churchyard, past the old stone cross,

and up Bell Hill, with as little regard to the inequalities of the steep ascent as though it had been daylight.

In an incredibly short time he was back, out of breath. He had seen a mounted horseman whom he called Mr. Clapham at the "Hart's Head," who said they need not look for the coach for an hour or more, the snow lay so thick on the roads Skipton way, and he brought his intelligence with the addendum, "So you need not be uneasy, Miss Earnshaw."

Without waiting for thanks, he was off again. Prayers would be over, he knew, and knew that his errand would be his apology. But he had reasons of his own for being early in, and to bed that evening, reasons he did not impart either to the kind old clergyman's widow with whom he was boarding, or to her more vigilant daughter.

Edith had her foot on the stairs, hastening to relieve the anxiety of the invalid, and to press some nourishment upon her. She was recalled by Janet.

"I say, Edith, t' lile bairn weean't gang

ta bed. Schoo says schoo's ta bide till Maister Allan cooms. An' I's afeard ov makkin her, gin schoo sets off in a tantrum an' flaah's t' mistress wiv her blutherin."

"Never mind, Janet, to-night," answered Edith, with a faint sigh, "better let her stay up than run the risk of disturbing mother *now*," and the unconscious emphasis on the *now* was a stronger argument than her words. "I will be down again directly, and try to coax her to bed."

"Schoo's baan ta be weshed. It's Setterday neet! I'se getten t' tub an' t' watter raady, and I'm amaast aght a payshunse waytin," said the maid, who stood with her bare arms in the kitchen doorway, a large-limbed, healthy, fresh-complexioned woman, but one little likely to consult the whims of a child.

"Never mind, Janet, to-night," repeated Edith, "Dora may be washed in the morning for this once. Besides, Allan might come whilst you were busy with her."

"Allus t' waay!" muttered the woman, as she hastened to remove the bathing-tub.

"If that bairn doan't mak soom foaks' hearts wark" (ache) "ane a theeas days, it's mich ta me! Bud I's noan baan ta stand it, an' I weean't."

In a few minutes the grumbling Janet was summoned up-stairs to lift the feeble patient whilst her bed was re-arranged, and then every trace of ill-humour had disappeared. Gently, tenderly, and easily the strong arms raised the fragile form which was yet far beyond her little daughter's strength to move, and her broadly dialectal tongue shaped itself to soothe the disappointment of her sick mistress, whose son's coming was so long delayed. Half an hour at least was spent in the invalid's room, and then she went back to her kitchen, thanking her stars that she had not had Dora in the tub when there was so much need for her active services above stairs.

Her presence there had enabled Edith to step below with a bulletin for her stepfather, whom she found with the big family Bible on a small round table near the fire, endeavouring to interpret its pictures to the

small comprehension of Dora, who still maintained her place on his knee, and was by no means to be "coaxed" to bed "before brother Allan" came.

Back went Edith to her post, and whilst active Janet bustled about to lay the supper-cloth and fry ham and eggs, as if she thought anxiety had no effect on appetites, she alternated between her fireside stool and the window, where she kept a close look-out through another half hour, which seemed three. All was silent outside, but the rain was over, and the moon showing a hazy disc. She kept closer watch as the minutes flew. At length she caught the glimmer of a distant lantern, and guessed that it was Solomon Bracken on his nightly errand; and she saw him pause with his foot on the worn step of the churchyard and look up. She knew that the clocks were on the stroke of eight: then came the bur-r-r, the thin strokes drowned by the eight full-toned ones, and then the clamour of the bell, and the feeble voice from the pillow saying, "Eight o'clock, and Allan not here!"

How Edith wished she could silence the bell, that she might listen for the guard's horn. Once she thought she heard footsteps and voices in the lane, but a cloud obscured the moon; when it shone again the bell had ceased, and there was no one to be seen and no one to be heard. More than half the village would be in bed.

She had again administered her mother's medicine, and had re-arranged the pillow and counterpane when——a loud and unearthly shriek rang through the silent air with awful clearness and intensity.

Mrs. Thorpe, weak and enfeebled, gave a startled cry and clutched the bedclothes in excess of fright and terror. Edith, also startled and terrified, after one hasty glance towards the bed, rushed to the window, as another fainter scream rose like an echo from below.

One minute later, a dark mass seemed to fling itself or be flung down the churchyard steps, come into collision with an advancing form, dash onwards, and then—their own gate was swung open. She glided softly

enough from the room, yet spurred by a double excitement darted along the landing and down the stairs, with all the haste she could.

Allan stood on the door-mat and caught her in his arms. As she sprang to his embrace and clung to him convulsively, he saw that she was white with fear, as she cried out, "Oh! Allan, I am thankful you are here. Whatever was that awful shriek? You heard it, did you not?"

Others had also heard, and before he could reply the parlour door stood open and Mr. Thorpe was there with Dora in his arms, clutching at his neck and sobbing in childish fright.

CHAPTER V.

SOLOMON'S DECLARATION.

WHETHER the sharp cry of Dora had completed the mischief wrought by that wild shriek from the churchyard, could never be ascertained. Edith, going into the room alone to calm her mother's fears and prepare her to receive Allan, found her with livid face and eyeballs fixed, the coverlet still clutched with rigid and spasmodic grip.

Another cry, that was a wail of agony, rang through the house. "Oh! mother, mother, why did I leave you? Speak to me! Oh! dear mother, speak!

But ere the cry had left her lips, or Edith had time to fling herself frantically down by

the bedside, and strive to loose the rigid fingers, Allan was in the room, in like distress; there was a rush of feet up the one flight of stairs, and the whole household stood around the bed. The screaming child was stilled to quietude; but there was no recognition in the mother's staring eyes, no word for the anxiously expected son.

Restoratives had no effect. In a state of distraction Allan was darting off for the doctor, without waiting for his stepfather's "Ay do, lad!" but Janet caught him by the arm, and in her blunt way said, "Stop ye here, Maister Allan. If schoo cooms rahnd ye'd best be at hand. Schoo maey hev summat to saey ta ye, an my shanks are as long as yowrs," and, without waiting for a reply, the rough but well-meaning woman, forgetting the previous terror of the night in the newer terror on that awful countenance before her, was gone.

The old bonnet she kept on a hook behind the kitchen door for wear in wet weather, was on her head in an instant, and as quickly was the candle in the ever-

ready lantern alight, but no cloak went on to fetter her free limbs; Janet Carr was as quick to think as prompt to act; but country servants in those days—and town ones, too, for that matter—did not stop to cumber or adorn themselves with outer garments when running ordinary errands; the full bordered white linen cap was a sufficient covering for the head indoors or out, and only on special occasions did they seem to think preparation necessary. Frippery had not come into fashion for servant maids, certainly not in our northern villages. The dark woollen petticoat, the short printed cotton jacket or overgown, and the check apron in ordinary work-day use, had a homely fitness and neatness about them, now looked for in vain, and a girl so attired was ready to run out at a moment's notice, and was a study for a painter when she did so.

So it was that Janet Carr only threw her bonnet on her head, although she had a mile of road before her. The lantern was a necessity to one unaccustomed to go abroad after nightfall, a safeguard against

loose stones, or outlying doorsteps, a guarantee that she should go ahead to Settle, and not to Stackhouse, where the road forked off so conveniently for mistake in the dark. But Janet had not paused to reason, hers was only intuitive perception.

Dr. Burrow, as the surgeon was called by courtesy, occupied an old house at the corner of the Market-place, abutting on the main road, and known as Lazy Corner from the fact that there loungers and idlers "most did congregate" to the annoyance of the peaceful inmates. He was a man of middle stature, always dressed in professional black, had a frilled shirt and neat neckcloth, trousers and short-waisted swallow-tailed coat, had dark brown hair and whiskers, and a capital face for a doctor, a round, pleasant, cheery-looking face, with bright, dark eyes; a face to inspire confidence in a patient, for the under-lip of his rather straight, wide mouth closed over the upper lip as if in assurance that he could keep a patient's secret—and his own. A needful qualification this for a country

doctor, for him especially so, as he was the confidential adviser of more than half the parish ; and, had he not kept his lips close, what pulling of caps and ears might there not have been !

He had been called from his supper before Janet had reached Settle Bridge, on which she was met and passed by a woman seemingly in as great haste as herself, who took the horse-road, and before she had gone a hundred yards beyond she encountered the doctor himself.

He was hurrying on as fast as his active limbs would carry him, when, something familiar in the coming step causing her to raise the lantern, the light fell on her face as on his.

"Hillo, Janet!" cried he, "what brings you here?"

"Oh, wheer 'ta baan, doctor?" was her exclamation, with the prompt addendum, "Ye mun coom wi' meh reght off, an goa 'toather folk at after. Ar missis hez hed a fit o' sum soart, an schoo's deein."

A shade passed over Dr. Burrow's beam-

ing face as he stopped short in his rapid walk.

"Dying! A fit do you say?"

The stoppage was but momentary. Janet had turned to keep pace with him, even as he put his first question. He went on rapidly, saying in an undertone, as if communing with himself,

"Dear me, this is a strange coincidence. Mrs. Thorpe in a fit, and Solomon Bracken in a fit, both at the same time."

"Whoat! Owd Solomon in a fit. Weel, I nivver!"

"Betty's biggest lass," explained the doctor, "came tearing up to the surgery like a mad woman only just now to fetch me. You must have passed her going back. She said her grandfather had been frightened by a ghost in the churchyard."

"A ghoast!" jerked out Janet, in a loud tone of contempt. "Him a sextant, an flaayed wi' a ghoast! An' it wur Solomon hez shrieked aht, t'owd fuile's med a rare neght's wark on it! He's killed mah missus, or I'hm nooan Janet!"

Genial Dr. Burrow was the friend of high and low; he was well used to familiarity, but here was something to be checked.

"Stop, Janet," he said, with quiet decision. "Your mistress was in a very critical condition when I saw her this morning. I did not expect her to live forty-eight hours. *Whatsoever*," and he laid an emphasis on the word, "whatsoever may have caused this sudden collapse, we must not be too ready to accuse."

"I'll say my say!" interrupted Janet. "Ah expect missis t' be deead afore we raich t'haase, un it's nowt but t' skrike at's to blame."

"What shriek?" he asked, and by the time Janet had answered his query they were at Ivy Fold.

For all the service Dr. Burrow could render there, he might have visited his humbler patient first.

There had been a relaxation of the muscles, a dropping of the eyelids, a release of the clutched bedclothes; momentary sight and recognition; a searching, yearning look that

passed from face to face, an effort of the lips to shape a word—"Allan" or "Archie," they knew not which—another spasm crossed the face, then settled into a smile as the lids fell once more, and breath was gone before the doctor crossed the threshold, or a word was spoken to husband or son.

At last the blinds were drawn at Ivy Fold, and there were aching hearts and bursting sobs behind them, and a little fair-haired child had cried itself to sleep in the soothing arms of another child with darker hair and eyes, on whom womanhood had fallen in a night, and a chivalrous young brother bent over both, and promised—ah, what did he *not* promise of love, and care, and protection in the time to come!

The fire was out in the white room upstairs—two fires were out, and the cold clay upon the bed mocked the inscription which had outlived so many births and deaths in that chamber; for there, with his face half hidden in the white sheet, a widower knelt in lonely grief, vowing to deaf ears how true a father he would prove to the orphans left

behind, the orphans comforting each other elsewhere.

Blinds down at Ivy Fold. Did the village need other token that the hoof of the pale horse had trampled on that roof, even though the death-bell was not yet heard?

Hark! surely that could not be the knell! Solomon Bracken must have stayed too long at the "Black Horse" overnight, so irregularly was it tolled! Such were the comments of the inhabitants rising from their beds, or taking leisurely their Sunday morning meal. But when it ceased, and, after the interval of an hour or more, the bells began to ring for morning service, the whole village was on the *qui vive*. It hardly recognised its own bells.

Commotion hushed to consternation before noon. It had transpired that Joe Guyer, a grey little man with an undoubted liking for his "drops," a sometime assistant to the sexton, had been hastily summoned to take the post, and that Solomon Bracken himself had lost the use of his limbs.

It was bruited abroad that he had run

home from his bell-ringing the night before, crying, "A ghoast ! a ghoast !" had straightway dropped on the floor in a fit, and never spoken since.

The sexton's affrighted exclamation found ready interpreters. Rumour spread in breathless undertones. Before the afternoon service it was currently reported that the man had seen the wraith of Mrs. Thorpe as a death-token. Then counter-rumour went forth that the spirit of Mrs. Thorpe's former husband had burst its bands to summon her to join him. The natural voice of Giggleswick sank to an awe-stricken whisper, people were drawn into groups, and a sort of shrinking from solitude was manifest.

Solomon Bracken was a tall, thin, bony man, with a strong flavour of mould about him. He had contracted a slight stoop in the shoulders, possibly with much deep digging, and had a wheezy croak of a voice suggestive of handling overmuch damp earth; he was somewhat self-opinionated, had a habit of thinking aloud, and a temper as sharp as his nose. There was no other

harm in the man; he was not unkindly or ill-disposed, but he was by no means a general favourite, and there was always more or less antagonism between him and the Grammar School boys, who persisted in saluting him as "Nosey," and "Wellington," in spite of his protests and Dr Howson's wonderfully elastic cane.

The mystery deepened when, in the course of a day or so, Solomon recovered the partial use of his tongue, and managed to falter forth that as he was picking up his lantern, after locking the belfry door, he beheld an awful spectre, in a winding sheet, rise before him in the moonlight, with its arms extended, and fiery eye-balls glaring in its grinning skull. It rose slowly, he said, as if from the ground close to the churchyard wall, on the Grammar School side, and scared him so that he dropped his lantern, and could remember nothing afterwards.

The old vicar, Parson Clapham, as eccentric a clergyman as ever mounted pulpit, scouted the idea of a spectre, and roundly affirmed that Solomon had been drinking and

had taken a white gravestone for a ghost.

This Solomon as stoutly denied, and but that Dr. Burrow came in and put an end to the controversy the man might have fared badly through the excitement of altercation in his then condition.

He was equally positive aud consistent when the Rev. Rowland Ingram, the head-master of the Grammar School, and the Rev. John Howson, the usher, went together to interrogate him. His story never varied, he was as certain of the grinning skull, the fiery eyes glaring with the light of the bottomless pit, the flowing drapery, and open arms that seemed ready to clasp him, as he was that he had lost the use of his limbs, and was likely to be crippled for life; and, as Solomon was by no means a man of vivid imagination, the two clergymen arrived at the same conclusion that he was either under the influence of some delusion, or that a trick had been played off upon him, which it was their business to find out.

He had other visitors, had Solomon, although Dr. Burrow had recommended quiet

for his patient. The sexton's widowed daughter who took charge of him, and who was so much a counterpart of himself as to be nicknamed "Mother Wellington" by the tribe of irrepressibles—notwithstanding her combative nose, had not so strong a mind as to say "Nay" when clergy and gentry crossed their humble threshold, whether the visit was of condolence or curiosity. Betty Dyson held the official appointment of sweeper, scrubber, and duster in ordinary both to church and Grammar School, and Betty was supposed to know on which side her bread was buttered.

And, though her own temper was ruffled on finding Solomon disturbed by the incredulity of his clerical visitors, she could but smile a welcome, and hasten to dust a dustless chair with her blue check apron, when Mrs. John Hartley came from Cateral Hall with kindly sympathetic face, and a few niceties for the use of the invalid, such as were otherwise beyond reach.

Nor could she be more discourteous when the wheel-chair of old Mrs. Cragg, in some

measure a fellow-sufferer with Solomon, was pushed in at the open doorway of the little shop where Betty sold tops and marbles, bulls'-eyes and parkin, kites and balls, pencil and crackers to the juveniles of the community, pins, tapes, cotton balls, pepper, salt, snuff, and tobacco to the elders.

Since Solomon's catastrophe her shop had been literally besieged by purchasers, and every purchaser was an inquirer. The pence of the Grammar School boys had always an affinity for Mother Wellington's till, and now every boy seemed to have pennies to spend. Betty liked money well, but she liked her father better, and the frequent calls into the shop when he needed attention had not sweetened her temper. Still she smoothed her apron when she caught sight of Mrs. Cragg's plain satin bonnet, and of the benignant countenance under it, round which was set a cap-border as prim as that of a Quakeress.

She was not often seen beyond the precincts of her own home, and Betty Dyson's ejaculation proclaimed as much.

"Whya, Mrs. Cragg, t'seight o' ye's gude fer sore eyes! Coom in. Ov all t'folk at's bin ta see fayther, theer's noan moar welcome, I'se suer."

Mrs. Cragg's conveyance was simply an arm-chair, to which strong castors and a footboard had been attached. Tim, the gardener, and Janet Carr's sweetheart, acted as outdoor charioteer, an office of considerable trust, if we take into account the steep inclines to be faced whichsoever road they took. Betty gave the man a nod as if to say he was not wanted, and, laying her own hand on the chair's high back, wheeled it round the end of the wooden partition or screen which separated the original open apartment into shop and "house," observing as she did so, in a tone intended to be complimentary to the present visitor, whatever it might be to former ones, "Aw toathers hev bin strong an hearty like, an it med him mad to sae them sa lish, an him liggin" (lying) "theer in sich a hobble. But mebbe it'll be soom coomfort ta see theere's oathers as badly as hissen."

Was there any echo in the good lady's heart? Had she ever felt a pang as young hearts and limbs bounded before her day by day, that she smiled so sadly as she responded "Ah, no doubt, it is a common failing."

"Faythe r, here's Mrs. Cragg coom ta ax how ye bin," cried Betty, as she wheeled the chair close to the high-backed wooden couch or long settle softened for repose by cushions, strongly suggestive of acquaintance with church pews, on which Solomon lay, with his arm tightly bandaged after bleeding, and a bristly grey beard which had not felt the keen edge of the Sunday morning razor. There Betty left the lady, an impatient tapping on her primitive counter with the edge of a coin serving as a summons into the shop.

CHAPTER VI.

NOT TO BE FORGIVEN.

MRS. ESTHER CRAGG had been twice married. Her second husband had been the Rector of Hornby, on the Lancashire border, where her ancestors were said to have held lordly sway in times remote, and where the father of her spouse had held rectorial sway before him. Learned men both, but they and their learning lay together under the chancel wall of the church they had served so long, and Hornby's castle-crowned steep cast its shadow on the slabs of slate which kept the brief record of their lives and deaths for posterity to ponder—if posterity were so minded.

Yet is it an injustice to say that their learning had gone to sleep with them. The sire had indoctrinated the son, and from him wife and daughter had imbibed such learned lore as served for an inheritance when the late rector's stipend was handed over by death to a successor. Then it was the widow took up her abode in Giggleswick, in a roomy house opposite to Parson Clapham's on a road leading from the summit of Bell Hill to the moors, and close to the limpid spring known as Bank Well, which supplied nearly all the village with water, and gave its name to the house.

Here she and her learned daughter Elizabeth established a boarding school for the reception not only of young ladies, but of young gentlemen also. The latter were chiefly juvenile probationers for the Grammar School, or simply boarders already placed on that classical foundation; and seeing that sixty pounds per annum was the minimun fee for a boarder, and that the maximum ran into three figures, the repute

of Mrs. Cragg's boarding school may be inferred, no less than that of King Edward's Grammar School.

With regard to the school itself, it was more select than large, including a few young ladies from distant homes, and a sprinkling of day-pupils from the vicinity to make up the number, and—I have a boarder's word for it—Mrs. Cragg made the place a pleasant home, to which the school was a supplement.

The extent of the premises could not be estimated from its frontage, although that was respectable; and it overlooked a sort of private way which led to fields beyond, turning only a broad shoulder to Well Bank, as that part of the mainroad was designated.

From the small central gate in the garden (or court) rails you saw merely a double house of the common grit-stone, with a paved walk straight to the porch-shaded door; broad low mullioned windows spread out to light rooms on either side, and three of the same type for each of the floors above.

Corresponding apartments at the back might be conjectured, also the long line of kitchens and minor offices built out in the rear at a right angle on the village side, with dormitories overhead. From the other gable extended an out-building or turf-shed devoted to a colony of ducks and poultry, whilst as large a colony of pigeons was accommodated with dovecotes here and there outside, and responded to quacking, cackling, and crowing, with the soft low coo peculiarly their own.

Here too was stabled Punch, the fat pony, and here on a kind of granary floor were kept gardening tools and winter stores of many kinds. In a line with this outbuilding of many uses was the large side gate which gave egress or ingress to Punch and his numerous young friends from the bye-path, beyond which lay the pony's paddock. And over the back of house and turf-shed had been trained a magnificent pear-tree of sufficient importance to form an item in Mrs. Cragg's lease, and to set unlicensed lips watering for its fruit, for the double

reason that it was luscious and forbidden. In spring the tree was a mass of white blossom, and the autumn show of fruit was glorious, but Parson Clapham, who retained the tree for his own use and benefit, was wont to grumble and say that it had been tythed before it was ripe for *his* gatherer, and that none but the parson had a right to take tythes.

There were busy workers in that dwelling-house, young and old, but they had their exemplars in yet another colony of workers, for whose straw hives niches had been left in the far boundary-wall of the kitchen garden beyond the spacious yard, and for whose use and delectation beds of the sweetest herbs were planted; a noble orchard, stocked with the choicest fruit, adjoined this prolific garden, and here, where the grass grew thick and rank under the trees, ducks and ducklings fattened on slugs and snails and "such small deer."

The path from yard to orchard lay between the outer wall on the village side, and a tall hedge,—hedges are rare in that

locality—and on the other side of this spread a smooth square plot of closely shaven grass to freshen up the stony yard, and bleach fine lace and muslin.

Close as was the village well the household had seldom need to draw upon its ample resources, for a spring as pure bubbled up clear and cold in the paved yard, then ran like liquid crystal over its stony channel, to lose itself and its purity in a duck-pond under the orchard trees.

In this orchard might be found something more than a duck-pond. There, too, stood a small octagonal edifice known as Apple Tree Hall, and regarded as the private property and sanctum of the boys. In fact, it had been built with considerable pains and ingenuity by Mrs. Cragg's elder boarders; outsiders, of whom Allan Earnshaw had been one, assisting in the collection of stones and other matters. There was no proper fire-grate, and but a rude attempt at a chimney; a few iron bars procured from the village blacksmith served the purpose of the former. A

carpenter had been hired to put in a door and window frame, but the boys themselves had glazed the latter, and added to the door a secure lock, the eldest boarder being the custodian of the key. Their seats were merely stools of very rude construction, their table equally rough; but no palace could have been dearer to its owners.

It was regarded by Miss Cragg with much disfavour, as a nursery of mischief, but good-natured Mrs. Cragg and Miss Vasey, her equally good-natured little niece, who had her home with them, and who played the part of general utility, held it to be a safety-valve for superabundant animal spirit, and the best guarantee for a quiet house. Had the twain been initiated into *all* the secrets of Apple Tree Hall they might *perchance* have veered round to the more rigid ruler's opinion.

We must, however, leave Apple Tree Hall with its secrets unrevealed, for Mrs. Cragg had left Solomon Bracken's with only half her errand accomplished, and was at the nail-studded door of Ivy Fold. Yet, if she

had failed to convince him that ghosts were creatures of the imagination, she had conveyed to him consolation both spiritual and pecuniary, and *he* was not the only one comforted.

On her way from the sexton's her chair had been met and taken possession of by two of her own boarders, Jasper Ellis and Martin Pickersgill, who had committed their school books to Tim, in their joint desire to convoy the old lady they reverenced to the house of mourning where dwelt the young lady whom they both, in boy-fashion, adored. And as there too dwelt Tim's sweetheart we may presume *he* was not too well satisfied with his summary dismissal.

Janet opened the door. The chair was gently tilted back to bring the front castors to a level with the low step, was wheeled forward into the large room, and then the boys, after bowing with unwonted gravity to their unconscious enslaver, as if in mute sympathy with her sorrow, decorously retreated to the "house," where Janet invited

them to seats by the fire, and, being hospitably inclined, did her best for their mental comfort by enlarging on the death of her mistress, and the fright the "daft sextant" had given them, and for their bodily by regaling them with well-buttered pikelets, fresh from the girdle, of which she was preparing a supply for the morrow's use and that afternoon's tea. Both Jasper and Martin appeared constrained and reserved, but Janet's baking, in the darkened kitchen, claimed so much of her attention that she failed to notice the peculiar expression of their two faces as they talked.

Mrs. Cragg had found the parlour redolent of black crape and French merino—"the newest thing in the market," John Tatham, the Quaker draper of Settle, had told Miss Vasey, who had done inexperienced Edith the service of shopping for her, and Martha Dyson, Betty's eldest girl, was putting the finishing stitches in a dismal frock for Dora to wear on the morrow. Edith, whose needle had also been busy, moving about with a

noiseless step and sad white face, was clearing away the dressmaker's litter.

She had not noted the opening of the outer door, but little Dora, nursing a pet kitten on the window-seat in the recess, had, child-like, lifted the linen blind on the sound of wheels, and crying out "Missy Cragg! Missy Cragg!" scrambled down from her perch in haste to hug the dear old lady who, albeit she had a somewhat red face, and had little beauty to boast of, won her way to young hearts without an effort.

Over Settle the clouds weep with much persistence; fair weather in February is not to be looked for, neither was Mrs. Cragg when rain was falling. That was the first fine day since her mother's death, but the morning having passed without bringing her old friend, Edith was even then feeling herself deserted in her loneliness. Miss Cragg, gravely reflective, had been to scatter crumbs of comfort, Mrs. John Hartley with kindly consolation, and little Ann Vasey, to show her sympathy, with

active service and tender-hearted tears, but the bereaved girl lacked the motherly arms of old Mrs. Cragg wherein to shed her own.

At Dora's cry she bounded forward, to check herself as suddenly, as the two young chairmen became visible—she had early learned self-repression. She was glad, therefore, when, content with her low-voiced "Thank you, tolerably well," the pair retreated, and Martha Dyson, obedient to a sign from Mrs. Cragg, took up her work and followed them, nothing loth.

Left with her aged friend, of whom Dora had already taken possession, Edith's enforced serenity gave way. She sank on her knees beside the welcome guest, and, burying her face in the receptive lap, let her imprisoned sorrow forth in sobs and tears.

"Oh! Mrs. Cragg," she cried. "My poor, dear mother! What *shall* we do without her?" It was all so sudden at the last, so awfully sudden, so terrible!"

"My dear," said the old lady, gently,

smoothing the mass of dark hair with one hand, whilst the other arm held wondering Dora, whose lips began to quiver. "Your good mother had long looked forward to this release from pain. You could not have desired to prolong her sufferings, could you?"

"Oh, no, no," was the instant answer, half choked by sobs. "But mother had so longed to see Allan, and say something to him before she died; and she could neither see him nor speak to him, although he was there."

"That is sad, my dear, she may have had some especial caution or instruction for him; a dying mother's words, kept in memory, might serve as a safeguard in many an hour of temptation and worldly peril. Yet do not be distressed, her anxiety might be only the natural yearning of a mother to take a last leave of a beloved son. What remains unspoken is the secret of the Lord, and He knew when to call your parent home and what was best said or unsaid."

Dora, knowing little of her loss, but

whimpering for companionship, had leaned across and slid her small soft arm round her sister's neck. Edith raised her head and answered, gravely,

"Mother gave *me* a charge, Mrs. Cragg, a very precious charge. She made me promise to watch over darling Dora, and be like a mother to her. And I will."

There were tears upon their lashes, but the dark steadfast eyes that looked so clearly into Mrs. Cragg's were full of resolute purpose. No fear of that girl faltering over aught so sacredly undertaken.

Mrs. Cragg drew a long breath before she replied,

"Did she, my dear? Why, you are only a child yourself. We shall have to call you a little woman now. Most likely Mrs. Thorpe's intent was to commit you both to your brother's care."

"So Allan thinks," and Edith kissed the forehead of her little half-sister as she spoke. "But Allan is so noble and so good, *he* is sure to care for us, even if father——" and

she stopped short, as it flashed across her mind that her mother's suggestion of a possible second marriage was too sacred a confidence to be breathed to others.

Mrs. Cragg noted the pause, and took the opportunity to lead the girl to speak of her mother's last hours, and the immediate cause of her release. As Edith told how she had watched Solomon Bracken go into the churchyard, heard the outcry he made, and saw him fling himself headlong, as it were, down the steps, to stumble against home-bound Allan, Mrs. Cragg put the question,

"Did you see no one in the lane at the time?"

"Not a creature."

"Neither before nor after?"

"Neither before nor——" Recollection dawned on Edith. "Stay," she said, "I *saw* no one; yet I fancied I heard some one pass the gate when the bell was ringing, but was not sure."

"I thought as much!" and Mrs. Cragg pressed her lips tightly on the words.

"Thought what, Mrs. Cragg?" asked Edith, rising to her feet, her eyes expanding with expectancy.

"Well, my dear, if the sexton *saw* what he *says* he saw, he has been the victim of a cruel practical joke. There must have been perpetrators. Intangible ghosts are born of drink or delusion."

Edith stood transfixed, as if unable to fathom the depths of such villainy. Her eyes flashed. "Then my mother was a victim too! It was a wicked and cruel thing. I could never forgive it—*never!*"

Mrs. Cragg was struck with the sudden change in the quiet girl. "Hush! Edith," she said, softly, "you must not say that. No one contemplated any injury to your mother, if consequences were calculated at all, and you know that her death was inevitable. At the worst, we can but say it was accelerated."

But Edith was not to be soothed. Neither Allan nor Mr. Thorpe had heard her mother's last wishes. She had imbibed Janet's theory that she had been killed, and

persisted in her declaration that she could never forgive the cruel act, a reiteration utterly at variance with the gentle nature of the girl. It was clear there was a hidden force beneath the surface, hitherto unsuspected.

CHAPTER VII.

SUSPECTED.

BEFORE Mrs. Cragg took leave she naturally inquired after the widower and Allan, neither of whom had made his appearance. She also asked if Mrs. Statham was expected.

"Aunt Statham was written to at once, but she was not well enough to be seen when Allan was in Skipton," said Edith, "so we do not expect she can come. Indeed, I hope she will not, for I might not be able to attend to her properly, and I should not like to offend. I was very thankful when Miss Cragg offered to preside at table to-morrow; I should be overfaced."

"No doubt, my dear; but about Allan and your father?"

"Oh, Allan goes back to Leeds on Tuesday. He has now gone over to Parson Clapham's, and to the undertaker's. He is quite a business man now," (how her face brightened with sisterly pride), "father does not seem able to attend to anything, he is in so much trouble," and the fleeting light faded from her eyes.

A sound something like "Hm!" issued from Mrs. Cragg's compressed lips, that was all, but interpreted it meant, "In trouble! and shifts his burden on to the shoulders of this boy and girl. Will it be always so. How will they bear it?"

Edith responded to the unsatisfactory sound. "Yes, father sits all alone in the little sitting-room. He has kept his papers and geological specimens there since mother was so very badly. But I do not think he is doing anything. For the first three days he sat, with his elbow on the table and his head on his hand, staring out of the window into Wildman's pasture, and I don't think he

saw or heard anything, for when we went into the room he never stirred until we touched him, and then he started. Mr. Hartley and Mr. John had been and talked to him, so had Mr. Ingram and kind John Tatham, but no one seemed to do him any good, and it made Allan and me miserable to see him."

"No doubt, my dear, no doubt. But you implied that he had thrown off his desponding lethargy—at least in part."

"Well, he has been better since Mr. Wilson was here on Wednesday."

"And who is Mr. Wilson?"

"Oh, quite a peculiar old gentleman; he travelled part of the way with Allan, and they had to help to get the coach through the snow. My brother met him in the village inquiring for Ivy Fold. And when Allan brought him here and asked for father, he was *so* surprised to find they were related. He had a letter of introduction to Mr. Thorpe, but I was afraid he would have to go away without seeing him. However, father no sooner cast his eye over

the letter than he came out of his room and shook hands with Mr. Wilson as if he had known him all his life."

"It was not a very seemly time for a stranger to intrude," observed Mrs. Cragg, with her head on one side as if debating the point with herself.

"Oh, I don't think he intruded at all. Father has not been the same since," replied the girl. "And he did make an apology for calling. He said that he had to go on to Lancaster by the coach that night, and should not be in Settle again for four months; and it turned out that he knew one of Allan's masters, Mr. Polloc."

"Then I suppose his business concerned Allan?" remarked Mrs. Cragg.

"Oh, no! Father said Mr. Wilson—he knew him well as 'Honest John,'—having found his name amongst the directors of Settle Machanics' Institution, and knowing the interest he took in geology, wanted him to 'widen his sphere of usefulness'—yes, those were the words, and to attend

some meetings in Leeds and Ripon, and I fancy he said to lecture as well."

"Public meetings! Lectures!" Mrs. Cragg looked amazed. Lectures were not so common then as now.

"Yes, Mrs. Cragg, and I daresay he will, for, since the idea has been put into his head, he does not seem half so unhappy. I am sure I was very much obliged to Mr. Wilson, though he is such a curious gentleman."

"I'se sure he's a very nice old gempleman," stoutly advanced little Dora, who had been listening attentively; "he stroked my hair and gave me some toffy, and he said I was pretty, and he liked pretty little girls, they were always so good."

"Nay, nay, Dora love," interposed Edith, "he said he liked pretty girls, but *only good girls* were really pretty."

The child pouted at the slight correction. "It all the same, Edie, I sure; isn't it, Missy Cragg?"

"No, my little dear, *very* different. But I hope Dora will try to be good, and then

we shall all think her pretty," was the smiling answer.

But little Miss—she had a sort of consciousness that she was not always disposed to be good—with a toss of the head which implied that she felt herself unjustly rebuked, rejoined promptly, "I *is* pretty; *father* says I is pretty."

"How very injudicious," thought the old lady; but, as though she had not heard, she changed the subject by expressing a hope that the new mourning Miss Vasey had selected was approved—and very soon departed.

When Mrs. Cragg's chair was drawn up the toilsome ascent of the village, sweeping with a curve to Well Bank and turning again from the high-road to her own gate, she saw standing on the low, broad step beneath the porch, the erect figure of the Rev. Rowland Ingram, B.A., and his somewhat less stately, though not less magisterial, usher, the Rev. John Howson, M.A., whilst Miss Cragg herself, with smoothly-banded hair and dark dress,

severely plain, was in the act of closing the door behind them.

As the chair was wheeled up the path, the boys doffed their caps to their masters, who raised their hats to do reverence to the respected widow of a fellow-clergyman, the door was again thrown back, and they returned to the parlour they had just quitted, followed by Mrs. Cragg and her daughter. Martin and Jasper, bowing with much ceremony, retired.

The Reverend Rowland Ingram was a fine, tall man, with well-chiselled features, in which dignity, benignity, and intelligence were blended.

Seating himself close to the old lady he addressed himself to her with little prelude or circumlocution; whilst his companion, half closing his eyes and leaning over the back of a tall chair in front of them, kept time to his senior's speech with a pair of grey silk gloves, which he held in the right hand and beat upon the left, drawing them gently through the circling thumb and forefinger.

"Madam," he began, "from prior conversation with Miss Cragg and Miss Vasey, I infer that you have no inkling of our unpleasant business here. Nevertheless, you cannot be unaware that a disastrous mystery holds the village in a ferment. I will not insult you by a supposition that you believe the unfortunate sexton to have beheld an apparition, but conclude you agree with us, that the painful problem admits but of two solutions: Solomon's inebriety, or an inconsiderate ('heartless,' threw in the usher parenthetically) practical joke."

"Precisely so," assented Mrs. and Miss Cragg, in a breath.

"That being the case, we may require your assistance, ladies, in the investigation which devolves upon us, as a duty, since our aged vicar declines to stir in the matter." He did not say that old Parson Clapham had laughed in their faces, and said it was no business of his, Bracken was an old fool and should have had his wits about him.

The ladies simply bowed in acknowledgment.

"Mr. Howson," he continued, "has made inquiries at the 'Black Horse' and elsewhere, but cannot discover that Solomon Bracken was less clear-headed than usual. Thus we are thrown upon the other horn of the dilemma, and suspicion naturally points to the pupils of the Grammar School."

"The young gentlemen in our charge, Mrs. Cragg, *our charge*," supplemented Mr. Howson, with emphasis, and an extra flick of his grey silk gloves, as though he would have said, "and yours."

"Precisely so," again assented Miss Cragg, but the old lady did not fall in so readily with the view of the two masters.

"Why, *naturally?*" she asked, drawing herself up and looking Mr. Howson full in the face, though her query was addressed to the head master. Then turning to Miss Vasey, who had come into the room (so slight and small a creature, she was more like a young girl than a woman nearing middle age), "Ann, Mr. Ingram and Mr.

Howson suggest that *our boys* have got up a ghost to frighten poor Solomon; do not *you* think there is some one in the neighbourhood as capable of playing such a prank as any schoolboy?" her manner implying that she had made up her mind on the subject.

Little Miss Vasey coloured up to the side-combs which kept her stiff little curls in order; but, though nervous and disconcerted, she answered with sufficient readiness, "I think our vicar could answer that question without referring to me."

The gentlemen glanced one towards the other. A new light had dawned upon them.

"Ah, to be sure," said Mr. Ingram, reflectively, in an undertone; "we forgot young Mr. Clapham!"

Young Mr. Clapham, be it observed, was close upon fifty, if he had not passed that Rubicon, and his faculty for practical joking was notorious beyond the confines of Craven. Moreover, he had been a suitor of Miss Vasey for more years than I would like to name, and still the little gentlewoman of

slender means said "nay" to the rich man, although there had been times when her warm heart had fought a hard battle with her cool head.

Mr. Ingram rose. "Thank you, madam, for your hint," he said, "we will make a point of questioning Mr. Clapham. Meanwhile, we will trouble you to ascertain if any of your boarders left these premises about the hour of curfew on Saturday night?"

"That they did not," volunteered Ann Vasey. "They were all in bed a quarter before eight, and every light out. I always go the round of the rooms as a safeguard against fire."

"There is nothing like being sure, Ann," said Miss Cragg, in a tone of superior wisdom, "and we owe it to the character of our establishment, to clear up any doubt of the kind. If any of our boarders are the culprits, they must be punished."

"They will be expelled from the Grammar School whosoever they be," said Mr. Howson, with a nod, and down came

the grey gloves on the back of the chair, as if to enforce his decision.

"Provided he is a pupil, and be found out," suggested Mrs. Cragg, as an amendment.

"Certainly, certainly!" acquiesced the other, somewhat testily, as he followed his senior to the door; and Mrs. Cragg said, as the door closed upon them, and the chair was wheeled to the tea-room, "Oh, dear, this is a weary business. I hope none of our boys were concerned. Expulsion from a public school leaves a stigma on a boy for life, to say nothing of the load upon the conscience in a case like this. Edith declares her mother's death was precipitated by the outcry made by Solomon in his fright, and vows she will *never* forgive the doer of the mischief, whosoever he be. She heard some one about the lane whilst the bells were ringing."

Meals were eaten in the big best kitchen or "house" there, as elsewhere. The boarders had been kept waiting for their tea during the two long confabs in the parlour.

There was a sudden shuffling of feet when Mrs. Cragg entered, talking as she came; Jasper hurried officiously across the floor to push her chair to its corner near the fire; and the change which came over certain faces was unobserved in the diversion so created.

The table was well provided, and the pupils were expected to wait upon each other. Save for the elder boarders, youths verging on sixteen or seventeen, tea was scarce, but milk was plentiful; oak-cake contested the palm with wheaten bread; and honey, clear and pure from the hives in the garden, served as a tempting substitute for butter, although the latter was not excluded from the board.

Miss Cragg, standing at the tea-tray end of the long table—two rows of blue-and-white earthenware mugs represented the young patrons of the cow—asked a blessing with slow impressiveness before she seated herself, aud the long delayed meal began in earnest.

But there was something in the manner

of their elders, no less than in the words dropped by Mrs. Cragg, calculated to destroy the serenity of the meal. Looks and whispers were exchanged, and little damsels and tall youths alike pondered the question, "What next?"

Miss Cragg returned thanks, the young ladies were dismissed to the school-room to prepare their lessons for Monday, the young gentlemen to the boys'-room for the same purpose, and for a while all was hubbub and clatter. No sooner, however, was the handle of the baize-covered door turned upon them than Burton, the senior boarder, took up a position at the corner of the fireplace, whence he issued a peremptory command to Danson and Smith, juniors of ten or eleven, to haul down the books and clean the slates, and be brisk about it, an order the youngsters thought best to obey, though ears and eyes did not seem to move in unison with hands and feet. Robins and Wardrop, Burton's class-mates, joined him by the fire, Jasper followed, and Martin, who had held aloof, was summoned to their conference.

With their heads close and their backs to the minors, they whispered together in undertones, and apparently without too much amity, for Martin Pickersgill, with an angry flush showing through the clear olive of his complexion, soon turned abruptly away from the group, saying with more heat than caution, "You should have taken my warning."

"And you'd best take ours," was sharply retorted, at which little Danson pricked up his ears, and blurted out, "What's the matter?"

"That's the matter. Long-ears," and Jasper's hand set the said ears tingling. "And take care you don't have your ears pulled as long as your tongue." Jasper had a faculty for bestowing epithets.

Martin was interposing, when the creaking wheels of Mrs. Cragg's chair were heard in the passage. There was a sudden scramble for books and places, the chair stopped at the door, and by the time it was opened, and Miss Cragg had propelled her mother into the room, all were at work save Burton.

He had turned leisurely to the bookshelves, and stood, with arm extended, reaching down his Greek Testament.

Of the whole group, Martin Pickersgill and little John Danson alone appeared discomposed, the red ear of the one and the flushed face of the other attracting the eagle eye of the learned spinster, with whom Martin was no great favourite.

It was no uncommon thing for Mrs. Cragg to spend an hour with her boarders, and hear the younger ones' lessons; but her coming this night somehow carried another meaning with it.

There was a troubled expression about her lips and brow, and her voice lacked its wonted cheerfulness, as she began, seriously,

"Young gentlemen, can you conjecture what brought your honoured masters here this afternoon?"

"Not the slightest notion," answered Burton, with coolness, as spokesman for the rest, whilst Martin only compressed his lips.

"Then you must know that suspicion rests on the boarders under this roof, of having personated a ghost last Saturday night for the purpose of scaring the sexton. Now, I can well believe that the actors in the unseemly frolic never contemplated its serious consequences, and, I have no doubt, regret their part in it, much as I shall regret if I find that any one of the young gentlemen under our care had a hand in the transaction." She paused before she continued,

"Mr. Ingram and Mr. Howson have left me no alternative but to put to you the question: 'Did any of you play that ghost?' I trust in your honour to give me a truthful answer."

There was a general and emphatic denial.

"Had *none* of you a share in this business?"

"I had not," answered Martin Pickersgill distinctly, to be echoed in varied tones by the rest.

"Then I may rest satisfied no one here has any knowledge of the culprits?"

Each and all proclaimed ignorance—all save Martin, and Miss Cragg, silently observant behind her mother's chair, noticed that his lips never moved.

She looked at him steadfastly across the table, and the blood mounted to his forehead. Her look said plainly, "You are the delinquent, and I know it."

CHAPTER VIII.

IS IT SATISFACTORY?

"THAT is satisfactory!" quoth the benign old lady, as her daughter thoughtfully wheeled her back to their cosy private sitting-room, where by the faint light of two mould candles in squat brass candlesticks, and the brighter light of the fire, Ann Vasey was occupied in trimming with narrow black love-ribbon (gauze-ribbon striped with satin, now out of date) a net cap of almost puritan primness for Miss Cragg's wear at the funeral next day.

When I say trimming, I simply imply strings to be tied beneath the chin, and plain folds of ribbon to cover joinings of the net.

No lighter style would have suited the woman for whom it was made. Miss Cragg's cap was part and parcel of herself. From the crown of her head to the sole of her foot, her dress was representative.

Quakerism—the leaven of Cromwell and his puritans—flourishes in and around Settle, and, albeit herself a clergyman's widow, Mrs. Cragg's father had been a quaker, who took a sort of worldly pride in his own descent from one of the illustrious rebel's daughters.

Methodism has also a foothold in Settle, and when it is told that fox-hunting Parson Clapham thought it no sin to convert the sanctuary into a market-house, and sell his own cattle from the pulpit, we need be under no surprise if parishioners, more pious than their pastor, gave in their adhesion to that evangelical offshoot of an establishment so scandalised; and whilst so far conforming as to attend morning service at the parish church betook themselves to the more devoutly conducted chapel in the afternoons.

The descendants of the ex-quaker were

of this number, and in Mrs. Cragg's raiment, no less than in that of her daughter, might be seen the influence of Quakerism and Methodism toned down by strong good sense. The latter had accepted her spinsterhood long before she crossed the borderland of forty, and placed a covering on her head as more becoming a woman of mature years, who had undertaken the training of young lives. Her gowns, always dark and of good self-coloured material, rose to her throat and came down to her wrists without superfluous plait or fold, the narrow skirt, as plain, descended to her instep, and revealed shoes always adapted to the roads and the weather. As a relief to a dress otherwise severe, she wore either frill or collar round her neck, secured by a small brooch, and a thick gold chain, to which hung a highly prized watch and seals, once her father's. Fully proportioned in form and features, she was neither gaunt nor massive, harsh nor imperious, yet you saw at a glance she was born to rule, and on good terms with herself.

And you saw this never more clearly than

when, as now, Ann Vasey was near to suggest a contrast. Only three or four years younger, yet the small, slight figure had the airiness and jauntiness of twenty; a certain dapper primness told its tale of unwedded preciseness, but there was that in her attire and manner which suggested that matrimony was not a relinquished possibility. Her thin, light brown hair was drawn up from the nape of the neck into erect bows on the crown, backed by a tall Spanish comb, which gave to the little lady fictitious height, whilst on either side her pleasing face clustered a faint show of curls. She cased her tiny feet in sandalled slippers or dainty boots, and had not scrupled to widen her skirts, and shorten them likewise, when the fashion reached the north. Then she saw that sky, and grass, and flowers were brightly tinted, and so left sombre hues to her more sober relatives, and, being but an unculled blossom herself, thought it no harm to add in her own person a bright spot of colour to a landscape or to a faded room.

She must have been very pretty in her

youth; even then she was the perfection of littleness; her tiny feet and hands, little learning, no lofty ideas or intellect, little in all but her heart, and that was larger than her frame.

"That is satisfactory!" repeated Mrs. Cragg, who had no desire to find the black sheep in her own flock.

"Yes, I think it will do," said Miss Vasey, holding the finished cap in her hand, and surveying it from all points critically.

"Yes, it is very nice, Ann, but mother does not refer to my cap," explained Elizabeth Cragg, as she stepped towards the table and snuffed the candles. "She is satisfied with the examination of our boys. I am *not*," and down the brass snuffers went into the tray, with decision. "If Martin Pickersgill is not the prime offender, I have no discernment."

Miss Cragg's superior wisdom and discernment were tacitly admitted facts. It was not without some trepidation Ann Vasey ventured to break a lance with her, but the little woman was strong in the cause of the

weak, or of justice, and she had reason to believe her sagacious cousin was biased by prejudice. Both she and Mrs. Cragg lifted their hands in amazement.

"Martin? never!" they cried.

"Yes, Martin. I watched him, mother, and saw how uneasy he was under your questioning, how he changed colour, and kept silent when the others answered you boldly."

"Sensitive people are not to be judged by change of colour," Miss Ann observed, faintly.

"He answered one question clearly, and that is sufficient for me. The boy is the soul of honour," was the old lady's protest and opinion.

"So you two seem to think. And that is the reason, I suppose, he was assigned the only bed-room with a window a boy could get out at."

The other ladies looked at each other inquiringly. She continued:

"I have long suspected it was he who steals the fruit. His West Indian mouth was sure to water for it."

"Yes, he likes fruit," assented Mrs. Cragg.

"But the apples and pears vanished before *he* came to board with us, and even his West Indian mouth could not consume *all* the fruit stolen," objected Miss Vasey. The fact was incontrovertible; and the little lady, having made a point, went on: "Now, Elizabeth, it is not like you to be unjust. Pray remember how superstitious Martin is, from living amongst those negroes. Why, I think it would kill him if he were forced into a churchyard at night, and to fancy he would play a ghost is ridiculous."

"I did not think of that," mused Miss Cragg, adding—with no will to be convinced—"Still he is no favourite with the other boys."

"He is no favourite with Jasper, I admit," urged her mother, "but John Danson seems to worship him."

"Oh, John! as he shares his room, he may share the stolen fruit, and John has good reason to like him."

"Listen!" said Ann.

During the greater part of this colloquy the sound of a guitar had floated in from the hall, but, as she spoke, a musical voice was also heard singing to the guitar, with strange pathos, "Home, sweet home."

"Listen!" said tender-hearted Ann Vasey, "that poor boy has no home, no parents to defend him. It would be a sin to breathe a syllable of suspicion against him; just or unjust. I would not have his expulsion from the school on my conscience, I know!" and her weak voice was strong in indignation. "Sweet home," she added, in a softer tone, "Poor Martin!"

She had scarcely known a mother's fostering care, a parent's home.

Miss Cragg looked at her watch.

"It is time for prayers," she said, and so closed the debate.

About five years previously, Mrs. Cragg had been visited by a brother's son, a Jamaica Indigo-planter, who had come to England as supercargo to his own consignments, having at the same time a valuable consignment of another kind on board.

This was no other than Martin Pickersgill, the son of Mr. Vasey's dearest friend and partner, who had left the mother country along with him when both had their fortunes to seek. Both had married. Mr. Vasey had lost the whole of his family by a catastrophe which does not affect this history. Mr. Pickersgill, whose wife had been a wealthy and lovely Spanish girl, lost her and three children during an outbreak of yellow fever, leaving only Martin, his youngest boy, who was visiting his foster-mother—a negress—in a distant part of the plantation when the epidemic broke out, and was kept apart. The sudden shock thoroughly unnerved Mr. Pickersgill, and under the assured conviction that he should not long survive, he made his will, binding his partner by a solemn promise to fulfil its obligations. He lingered in a shattered condition about five months, during which he made an idol of his boy, and then the same yellow monster laid its hot paws upon him, and poor Martin, in his tenth year, stood orphaned by a newly-made grave, with his

hand in that of his only friend, Elihu Vasey, his father's partner, his own godfather, and his guardian.

But there was yet another guardian to whom Martin was consigned, with whom Laurence Pickersgill had maintained a correspondence during the whole period of his settlement in Jamaica. This was no other than Josiah Proctor, the Skipton lawyer, whom the will characterised as "an honest, upright man, well acquainted with the Pickersgill family and affairs, who would surely watch over Martin and his interests," and who was moreover enjoined "to assert the boy's rights when he became twenty-three, or earlier, if occasion required."

What those rights were the will did not specify, but it provided that Martin should, if possible, be entered at the Giggleswick Grammar School, where his father, the testator, had himself been educated.

Elihu Vasey was deputed to carry on the plantation as heretofore, for the joint benefit of Martin and himself, two-thirds of the Pickersgill profits to be remitted to Mr.

Proctor for safe investment in England, the other to be placed out by Mr. Vasey as he thought best for his ward. There was a very liberal provision made for the two executors, and also for his son during his minority. The will was made in duplicate, and one copy placed in a small sandal-wood box along with sundry other papers—attestations of marriages and births—to be lodged with Josiah Proctor.

He accepted his trust, the box and the boy, as though he had expected them. He made interest to obtain his ward's entrance into Giggleswick School, and Elihu Vasey made interest of another kind to place him amongst his aunt's boarders.

The parting between Martin and his West Indian guardian was a sorrowful one, and, though the planter went out into the world and its bustle, he could not forget the mournful look of those black, lustrous eyes, or the trembling of the full lips, the quiver of the curved nostrils, or the pallor of the clear, olive complexion, as the boy strove to play the man and keep his emotion under in

the presence of strangers. He went away haunted by the handsome melancholy face, and Martin hurried to find a quiet corner where he could shed his tears in secret.

Ann Vasey found the ten-year-old child crouched down in the shadow of a great sofa in the best parlour, sobbing bitterly. She smoothed his wavy, jet-black hair, and said a word or two of solace, and from that moment the two understood each other, and were fast friends. They were alike of quick and hasty temperament, but generous and forgiving nature, and had a like contempt for aught that was mean or dishonourable. In Martin's idea, deceit and meanness were characteristic only of the black slave.

He had been in Giggleswick barely three months, when, on his way from school one day, he met Tim at the side gate, who told him "ta mak haaste in; theer war a rare big box coom for him."

In he went, to find Miss Cragg kneeling on the floor of the best kitchen, by the side of an open box, with a letter in her hand, also open, which she read to the end, and

then handed over to Martin Pickersgill, to whom it and the box also had been addressed by Elihu Vasey, then on the point of sailing.

The box contained books, music, dominoes, draught-board and men, a magic lantern and slides, a huge plum-cake, and a guitar in a case, but Martin took cognisance of nothing but the open letter and the broken seal.

His fiery blood was up. Without a second glance at its contents, he cried, passionately, "How dared you—how dared you open my letter? What right had you to open either box or letter addressed to some one else? It is mean and dishonourable!"

Miss Cragg rose slowly to her feet, and confronted the indignant boy, who stood there, flushed and angry, crushing the letter in his clenched right hand. Never before had she been so brought to bay. Her hand was half raised as if to strike the insolent lad who had presumed to call her privilege in question. At that instant Mrs. Cragg,

then less infirm, came on the scene; Ann Vasey and a maid-servant hurried in from the back-kitchen, and the other boys came tripping in from school.

Mrs. Cragg had overheard half of Martin's indignant protest; the open box and letter in his hand explained the rest. To her immaculate daughter's surprise she maintained the right of the boy to receive his box and letter inviolate, and admonished her never again to commit such a breach of trust.

The rebuke so publicly administered preserved intact all other letters from Martin's guardians; but from that time forth there was a tacit antagonism between Miss Cragg and him. Her impeccability had received a blow not to be forgotten, and hardly to be forgiven.

Her dislike took the form of favouritism, when, twelve months later, Mr. Proctor brought another pupil to the Grammar School, another boarder to them in the shape of his own grandson, Jasper Ellis, whose mother had made a runaway match

and left a doting parent for a worthless vagabond. Pinching want and privation had Jasper known before his mother surrendered him to his grandfather, and the boy's character had no doubt taken a tinge from his early surroundings. His schoolmates nicknamed him "Foxey," whether from the colour of his hair, or from other peculiarities known only to them, has yet to be seen. At all events he was wondrously obliging, and was careful in many small matters which commended him to Miss Cragg—ay, and to others.

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. STATHAM'S DIGNITY.

SATURDAY was the weekly holiday of both public and private schools. Miss Cragg betook herself to Ivy Fold shortly after breakfast, advising Miss Vasey to lose no time in following her, as "poor Edith would be sure to need countenance and support."

Ann lost no time; but the domestic arrangements of a boarding-school are not made with a wave of a fairy's wand, and although Burton had undertaken the supervision of his fellows, and Miss Metcalfe, the eldest pupil, had been deputed to watch over the younger ladies, under the presi-

dency of Mrs. Cragg, it was nearly ten o'clock before she could assume her own mourning habiliments and follow her cousin.

As she was about to turn from Well-bank down Bell Hill, she beheld Jasper Ellis running at full speed from the top of the hill, and stood still until he drew near, when she observed that he had buttoned his topcoat over something bulky, and that there was a broad grin on his face. She had supposed him engaged on Monday's lessons in the boys' room.

"I say, Miss Vasey," he called out before he reached her, "here's Goody Statham in a postchaise! I saw her queer bonnet poked out of the window. Fancy 'Pretty Poll' at a funeral!" and on he rushed to the side gate without pausing to be interrogated or examined at closer quarters.

He dared not have so avoided Miss Cragg, but no one stood in much awe of little Miss Vasey.

She went on with her short steps to the house of mourning, to repeat Jasper's news and put all there in commotion.

"Aunt Statham! and not a word to say she was coming!" ejaculated Edith, almost piteously.

"And her parrot, too!" exclaimed Mr. Thorpe, in a tone which at any other time would have been lugubrious.

"Then there'll be that Deb, as sure as foire burns and watter's wet!" cried Janet, in a huff, when the news was repeated to her. She had some knowledge of Deborah, and there was little love lost between the two. Deborah was as stiff, slow, and methodical, as her mistress was restless, nervous, quick-witted, and, if anything, rather more tenacious of respect, as Mrs. Statham's confidential maid was likely to be after more than thirty years' service.

But *for once*, Mrs. Statham was unaccompanied by either her parrot or Deborah.

In consideration of the steep hill, and Mrs. Statham's apprehensions, the chaise had been wisely left at the "Hart's Head," and slowly, as befitted her sixty-five years and that solemn occasion, she made her way down to Ivy Fold, leaning on the arm

of her friend and legal adviser, Josiah Proctor, whilst idlers stood still in the road or round the old cross gaping after them, more than one saying as they passed out of hearing, "There's a queer pair."

And certainly they did look peculiar. The brisk, bright, middle-aged gentleman, whose deeply dimpled face would not smooth into solemnity, and whose dress was at least a decade behind the time; as his age was about the same distance behind that of his companion, looked juvenile beside the woman whose garments had not changed their fashion or their hue for nearly four decades; from the time indeed when the first French Revolution stamped its fashion, and something worse, on civilised Europe. Had her hooded cloth cloak been grey, or even scarlet, and come to her heels, it might have passed muster, for such were still current in country places, but it was black and descended little below her waist; and her dress was an open robe of bombazine worn over a quilted petticoat of taffeta, all black. It was her bonnet,

however, which attracted attention. Imagine the penthouse brim of a "mushroom hat," with a huge bag-crown inflated like a balloon; and imagine the deep boarder of a mob-cap showing beneath this over the curls of her "front" (a genuine mob-cap of fine French cambric, with a bag-crown and frill-boarder deepening towards the ears). Imagine, too, a face beneath the bonnet somewhat pinched and lined, with keen, restless grey eyes, an aquiline nose brought into prominence, and the chin also by the retirement of the lips where teeth were deficient; and suspend a fan nearly half-a-yard long to a spare arm encased to the elbow in a black-kid mitten, and you will not be surprised that the "queer old dame," on the arm of the attentive gentleman in the spencer, attracted the attention of more than village rustics.

Giggleswick was, however, not wholly unacquainted with the peculiar old lady's appearance, and by the time the door of Ivy Fold had closed upon them, it was buzzed about that Miss Statham had come

to Thorpe's. She *was* Miss Statham. Her spinsterhood had been the one dominant fact of her life's history, to which all that was peculiar might be traced and dated back. Only very recently had she intimated to her friends, through Deborah, that Mrs. would be a more respectable prefix, considering her age, and friends had taken the hint. There was, however, nothing peculiar about the manner in which, as soon as she entered, she threw her arms around Edith and Dora, and even Allan, exclaiming, "Oh! my poor children, to think that my dear niece is taken from you in her prime, and I, a worn-out husk, I who have waited and longed for death, am left behind!" Nothing peculiar about the tears which rolled down her prematurely withered cheeks, and fell on Dora's new crape, to crystallize and glisten there as a memento, or in the way in which she wrung the widower's hand, and sobbed out her hopes that her niece was happy, and that he would bear his loss like a man for the sake of the children.

Nor was there anything peculiar in the way

in which she wept over the cold, white, passive face in the white room upstairs, and renewed old promises to care for those the dead had left behind.

Nothing peculiar. There had been other tears and promises—many promises. Would the promises be kept?

There was, however, some restlessness apparent when she came downstairs into the large room, and found Miss Cragg presiding over the funeral cake and wine, and Miss Vasey handing it round to the assembled guests; but she drew Dora to her side, and hid any displeasure she might feel under cover of her bonnet-brim, as she dived into the pannier-like pockets beneath her robe, and drew thence a large paper of sweets wherewith to console the "lile bairn" who had caught the infection of Aunt Statham's tears, and cried, in part, because they had spoiled the crape bows upon her sleeve; but the old lady knew not the shallow foundation of Dora's tears, and the drops found the way into her heart. Abstractedly she drew from another receptacle a gold snuff-

box, fitted with a tiny snuff-spoon, whereby to console herself, but closed it with a sharp snap, as if self-rebuked, and dropped the box back into its pocket with a sort of twinge.

She kept the child close to her, caressingly smoothing the fair silken curls, which cost Edith so much trouble night and morning, her keen, restless eyes all the while glancing right and left, under covert of her bonnet's drooping brim, noting all that passed, from Miss Cragg's very much-at-homeness, and Mr. Thorpe's mental absorption, to Edith's seeming composure, as she handed gloves and hatbands for distribution to her brother, who, for his part, appeared only too ready to spare his sister in performing these little offices, which we now-a-days delegate to a paid functionary, one of those who soon appeared with a bundle of hideous cloaks wherewith to envelope the mourners of the male sex, whilst Edith tenderly withdrew Dora to equip her for the sad ceremonial.

There was a hearse of some kind stored in a barn at the foot of Bell Hill, where a

horse was also kept to assist carts or other laden vehicles up the ascent; but with the churchyard so near to the house its use would have been absurd. Four gentlemen, friends of the family, bore the sad burden to its last resting-place, the mourners following in order, Mrs. Statham, whose face was twitching with nervous tremors, marshalling herself with her two grandnieces clasped by the hand on either side, which the onlookers regarded as a good augury for their future —the old lady having the repute of being richer than she really was, and "uncommonly good where she took."

"Where she took!" Ah, there was the rub! She was somewhat peculiar in her likings and dislikings. Apt to take prejudices and prepossessions, for which she gave no reason—and was supposed to have none.

Among the spectators congregated in the churchyard to witness the restoration of a twice-wedded wife to her first husband, and the overwhelming grief of the second, there was one who listened whilst the solemn service was mumbled by the Vicar as a

business to be despatched somehow, a mere youth of fifteen, who fixed his mournful gaze on Edith, as the moisture gathered in his black eyes, and his thoughts travelled over the ocean to far-off graves in a tropical isle, where his mother and father were laid, but *not* forgotten.

His own orphanhood made him keenly alive to that of others, and his aspect told it.

Miss Cragg's glance rested on Martin.

"Ah!" thought she, "his conscience is pricking him."

"Poor fellow!" said Ann Vasey to herself, "I suppose he is thinking of his own mother."

You see, people's thoughts will wander even at such times, and differ as the people.

It was all over. The clods had fallen on the coffin lid, with a sound that had its echo in sobs and groans; the red-eyed mourners and their friends went back to Ivy Fold; the men to the large room where Janet and Betty Dyson (always in request when lives came in or went out) had joined table to

table and spread out the best napery, the best glass, the best black-hafted knives and three-pronged forks, the silver tankard, salts and spoons, the quaint cruets and the willow-pattern plates in piles, hot as the dinner prepared to fill them, when the blinds were drawn up, hats and cloaks laid aside, bonnets and pelisses left above stairs, and their owners ready to take their places.

All had gone pretty smoothly until this said taking of places.

But no sooner had Janet planted a huge smoking sirloin at one end of the table, and a Yorkshire pudding at the other end, a boiled leg of mutton and a ham midway, with a few light matters in the way of fowls and vegetables in the intermediate space and Miss Cragg, in her temporary character of hostess, indicated the seats of the guests, right and left, assuming her place in front of the pudding, and assigning to Mrs. Theodora Statham the post of honour to the right of the host, than the old lady's dignity was touched. She threw all into confusion by her sudden resentment of a sup-

posed affront, and a breach of prerogative.

She clasped her black-mittened arms across her waist, drew her slender figure up to its full height; the tremor which ever ran through her frame when she was agitated twitched her wrinkled face, disturbed the regular folds of the white lawn kerchief which decorously covered the withered neck, shook the pendent borders of her mob cap over her aged ears, and gave undue prominence to her aquiline nose and pointed chin.

"Methinks it is somewhat early, Miss Cragg, for a stranger to occupy the place of my dead niece."

And what a glance of fiery scorn and indignation her keen, grey eyes shot at the bewildered widower, then brought to bear on Elizabeth Cragg as she flung the words, as it were, in her face.

There was a breathless pause, men stood with their hands on the backs of their chairs; Mrs. Hartley and Miss Vasey rose, and so did Mr. Thorpe; Allan stood dismayed.

For a moment Miss Cragg's eyelids trembled, and her colour changed, but only for a moment; she was not one to blench when she was conscious of no wrong.

Before Edith could do more than lay her timid hand on her grand-aunt's arm, and cast an imploring look, with the ejaculation, "Oh, Aunt Statham, don't!" Miss Cragg had answered for herself.

"I think, madam, you labour under a misapprehension. I occupy this place as Miss Earnshaw's very old friend, anxious only to relieve my inexperienced young pupil of an onerous duty at a trying time. Had you, Mrs. Statham, announced your intention to be present, no doubt other arrangements would have been made."

"No doubt!" echoed the old lady, with infinite scorn.

"Oh, aunt," pleaded Edith, "Miss Cragg has been so kind."

"No doubt!" repeated the dame, in the same icy tone.

"I shall be most happy to exchange places with Mrs. Statham, if——"

"No doubt!" and the close lips curled into a contemptuous smile.

Mr. Thorpe blundered out something unintelligible.

Allan came forward boldly.

"Come, auntie," said he, "this won't do. Edith asked Miss Cragg to preside to-day, and I know she is here at great inconvenience to herself. We thought you were too ill to come. You ought to be ashamed to insult so kind a friend. You do not know how good she has been to poor mother."

Mrs. Statham looked at her grand-nephew blankly. Was this the subdued, retiring boy she had hitherto known? Surely Leeds had wrought a marvellous transformation!

There was a hammering on the table to arrest attention. Dr. Burrow spoke.

"Ladies, dinner is spoiling; cold Yorkshire pudding is uneatable and indigestible. I vote that we eat our dinner and settle disputes afterwards." He had nothing either to lose or gain by the touchy old dame.

"I agree with the doctor in every way

and shape," seconded Mr. Proctor, who had left his place and come round to try his powers of suasion.

Mr. Thorpe did the same, and finally Mrs. Statham filled the place Miss Cragg insisted on vacating, whilst Mrs. John Hartley sat by Mr. Thorpe, and Miss Cragg took that lady's seat, having preserved an equable demeanour that did infinite credit to her forbearance. Mrs. Statham had contrived to spoil the dinner, to substitute a real affront for an imaginary one, and to make everyone at the table uncomfortable, none more so than herself. *She* felt anything but triumphant, and not a little annoyed when she discovered that agitation had made her too nervous even to help the pudding with dignity and composure.

CHAPTER X.

A MAN'S WILL AND A WOMAN'S WILL.

APPETITE amongst the Yorkshire hills, where the air is keen and bracing, is not to be calculated from a smoke-dried Londoner's dainty point of view. Meals had need to be substantial, and "kickshaws" were of small account there in the days of which I write. Funeral feasts were always solid, and washed down by pure home-brewed ale, and plenty of it; sometimes a *little* too much.

It was not so on this occasion. Mr. Thorpe himself was a temperate man, Dr. Burrow drank only water, and there were two lawyers present who knew there was business to follow the dinner.

It was this "business" which had determined Mrs. Statham to dispense with her maid and impress Mr. Proctor into her service for the day, her plans by no means embracing the discomfort of a "strange bed," or a toilet without Deb.

She was therefore impatient to see the table cleared and the said business introduced, being anxious to know the precise position of her nephew and nieces with regard to money matters. She had come to "look into affairs," and brought Josiah Proctor to watch over the children's interests, "lest there should be any roguery, you know;" having quite made up her own mind that the second husband *must* be adverse to the children of the first marriage.

No sooner was the cloth removed than she tapped on the bare mahogany with her fan, to call attention, contriving at the same time to arrest a conversation between Miss Cragg and Mr. Proctor relative to his ward and his grandson.

"Business, sir," said the old lady to her lawyer. "Time is flying."

Had a drill-sergeant called "Attention!" to his men, the effect could not have been more instantaneous. The flow of talk was checked, chairs were pushed back, spines stiffened, and heads held up to attend.

Archibald Thorpe flushed slightly, leaned across the table to say a word or so in an undertone to old Mr. Hartley, the other lawyer, then threw himself back in his chair, and beckoned to little Dora to come and take her accustomed place on his knee. Lawyer Hartley began to fumble in his hind coat pocket, and Josiah Proctor, bending his head forward with a jerk, as if to acknowledge Mrs. Statham's intimation, struck his hands smartly together, gave the palms a brisk rub, and began to say, whilst Allan and Edith, seated together, looked in each other's faces as if to ask what was coming,

"Mr. Thorpe, at the instance of our friend, Mrs. Statham, when the intelligence of Mrs. Thorpe's lamented decease reached us, I communicated with the late Mr. Earnshaw's solicitor, and requested that the will of the said deceased Allan Earnshaw should

be produced this day, and read over, for the better instruction and satisfaction of all parties concerned, and the due observance of its conditions."

Mrs. Statham nodded.

Again Mr. Thorpe flushed slightly. "I am not much of a business man myself, sir," he answered, quietly, "but I am quite as desirous as Mrs. Statham can be to ascertain the precise terms of—of—Mr.—the will, by which my late wife held the property under her control, not merely with regard to my own position, but its bearing on the children of her former marriage, and our future relations to each other. I had therefore anticipated Mrs. Statham's wishes, and conveyed to Mr. Hartley my own desire that the will of Mr. Earnshaw should be read and duly carried out. But let me say this beforehand, that, whatsoever be its provisions, I trust that the connection between myself and my step-children may not be disturbed, and I venture to say that they will find in me as much a father as they have hitherto found me."

"Eugh!" muttered Mrs. Statham, grumpily, "much that has been, I know," whilst Edith wiped her tearful eyes, and wondered if in her secret heart she had done her stepfather injustice.

Mr. Hartley had the will open, his gold-rimmed spectacles descended from his forehead to his nose, and he proceeded to peruse a lengthy document, of which it is only needful to give an abstract; restless Mrs. Statham fidgeting with her fan or her snuff-box, and throwing out an occasional interjection meanwhile, but never shifting her keen grey eyes from the face of Mr. Thorpe the whole time.

This was not altogether a pleasant position, as will be understood from the tenor of his predecessor's will, which, in the first place, conveyed to the testator's beloved wife, Edith, Ivy Fold, and all the personal goods and chattels contained therein, for the term of her natural life, provided she resided on the premises, and kept them in good preservation for transmission to his son Allan, and Allan's heirs in due course.

It set apart for the said son Allan two thousand pounds, to be paid to him at the age of twenty-one years, and one thousand pounds for his dear daughter Edith, to be handed over to her on her marriage or her coming of age, the interest in these sums to be expended in the education or maintenance of the children at the discretion of his executors.

All other properties whatsoever were left unconditionally, for the use and benefit of his wife Edith for the term of her natural life, and at her death to be divided between his son Allan and daughter Edith, in the proportion of two-thirds for Allan, and one-third for Edith ; and, in case his wife should decease before the majority of Allan or the majority or marriage of Edith, such proportion of rentals or interest to be applied for their use or benefit as the executors, his friends William Hartley, solicitor, and Thomas Dixon Burrow, surgeon, should think fit, the executors' right and control ending with the periods named.

Many an interjectional "Eugh!" and

"Tcha!" had Mrs. Statham thrown out in comment. As the last word fell from the reader's lips, she jerked out, "Eugh, always the lion's share for the lads!" adding, "And what may the separate shares be worth, now? At a rough estimate, that is, sir," addressing old Mr. Hartley.

The old gentleman lifted his head from the parchment he was re-folding, looked quizzically at the speaker down the long table, over the gold rims of his spectacles, and answered, drily,

"Values fluctuate, as you will be well aware, Mrs. Statham; but if we say approximately three thousand five hundred for the girl, and seven thousand for the boy—exclusive of Ivy Fold—we shall not overshoot the mark. Eh, Dr. Burrow?"

Dr. Burrow nodded assent. The eyes of brother and sister, who sat with hands linked together, met once again with an expression which told how greatly inexperience magnified their fortunes. Mr. Proctor rubbed his hands together as expressively as if he had said, "Perfectly equitable and

satisfactory," and he no doubt would have said it but for Mrs. Statham's fresh interruption.

"Eugh! And what's to be done with Ivy Fold? And where's Edith to go? And what shall you do with Dora, Mr. Thorpe, since this is no longer your home, and Allan lives in Leeds?"

Allan started to his feet before Mr. Thorpe could well stammer out, "Really, Mrs. Statham, you—you take me by surprise, I have not had time to consider," and impetuously, as if he thought she had outraged all their feelings, the youth exclaimed,

"Not his home, Aunt Statham? If it is *my* home it is father's home, and Dora's, and Edith's above all. *She* will not go anywhere else if I have a voice in the matter," and he threw his arm round his sister as if to enforce his protest against any separation, whilst a general murmur of approval ran round the room, in which none was more hearty than Josiah Proctor.

Edith here put in a timid word.

"If you please, aunt, mother gave Dora

into my charge. I was to take very great care of her, and not to let any harm or trouble come near her—so we *must* live together, you see."

"Oh, you must, must you?"

"Yes, and if you please, aunt, mother thought that, as Dora was your namesake, you would—you would——"

She hesitated. The old lady, with her face twitching, concluded the sentence: "Be a fairy godmother, to shower gifts and good fortune upon her, I suppose! Tcha! I came here with a plan of my own for you girls, but, as everything seems pretty well settled without me, I shall go back as I came. Come, Mr. Proctor," and she rose from her seat, "there is nothing for you or *me* to do *here;* there will be a *will* to draw up when we are back in Skipton," and the borders of her cap flew wide with the toss of her old head.

There was a general movement in the room. Mr. Thorpe put Dora down, and came forward to explain. Edith clung to her arm and Dora to her robe; Allan ten-

dered an apology; the two lawyers intervened, but she was not to be mollified. A second affront had been put upon her, inasmuch as she, the wealthy head of the family, had been utterly ignored from first to last —even in the will just read to her. That was why her niece had always kept her in the dark about it, she said.

With a wave of her fan she rejected all overtures, and, with as much majesty as she could assume, she marched out of the room on her high-heeled shoes, and mounted the stairs to Edith's chamber, where her cloak and bonnet awaited their owner, she having previously expressed a desire, which was tantamount to a command, that Mr. Proctor should give orders to have the postchaise in readiness immediately.

There was a wonderful deal of imperturbability under Mr. Proctor's friskiness, and he was in no such desperate hurry. He had determined on a call at Well Bank to see the boys, Jasper and Martin, before he went back. Besides, glasses and decanters had been placed on the table, and he had no

mind to go without his glass of grog, or to travel with the old dame in her then frame of mind.

Whether, as he left the cottage, ostensibly to obey instructions, he gave a hint to Janet, or some one else did, certain it is that that diplomatic individual hurried up to the bedroom where the offended old lady was vainly endeavouring, with nervous hands, to dispense with Edith's proffered assistance, and adjust her bonnet on her shaking head to her satisfaction.

"Why, Mrs. Statham," she cried, in amaze, "ye's nivver goin'! I's fair maffled! Goin' withaght yer tay! Goin' all t'way ta Skipton withaght bite or sup! I nivver heeard av sich a thing. I'd nivver hev baked them pikelets if I'd thowt ye'd goa back afoar tay. Yez baan ta staay an hev yer tay, an taste mah pikelets. I'm not goin' ta hev ye goa hoam hauf clemmed. Ye'd be rare and badly afoar ye got theer. An then I'd hev Deb abaght mah lugs, suer as foire burns and watter's weet."

Janet had measured the length of Mrs.

Statham's foot before that day. She had fitted her now to a nicety. If the ancient spinster had a special weakness, it was for strong tea and pikelets; and Janet's pikelets, like her haver-bread, were incomparable; and if she stood in fear of mortal, it was of Deb—her own maid. The very mention of Deb's name suggested that individual's aspect if a fit of spasms followed the fifteen miles' ride without the previous sustenance of pikelets and hyson. Would Deb regard her self-inflicted martyrdom as heroic or quixotic?

Deb was certainly a good name to conjure with. She stood irresolute. Janet's unsophisticated attention was evidently soothing. The tearful caresses and entreaties of her grandnieces moved her more than she would own. An appeal in the name of the dead niece whom she had loved did the rest. She embraced both her grandnieces, graciously condoned offences which had never been contemplated; consented to have her bonnet and cloak rearranged—not removed; and, not without

considerable hesitation, allowed Edith to escort her downstairs, and usher her into the room below, much as one who had condescended to remit a sentence of excommunication.

Her humours were pretty well known. Janet had acted as courier in advance. She was received with deference. No allusion was made to what had gone before. She entered into affable conversation with Mrs. John Hartley and Miss Vasey. Compared notes with Miss Cragg in respect to certain pains in the head and face to which both were subject, expressed her willingness to adopt a certain specific with which Dr. Burrow provided Miss Cragg, and, by the time Janet appeared with the tea and hot pikelets, had apparently forgotten that her messenger had delayed his return, or the possibility of post-horses being kept waiting.

But she did not change her purpose about her new will, for which Josiah Proctor received instructions during the ride home.

CHAPTER XI.

APPLE-TREE HALL.

WHATEVER might be Mrs. Statham's presumed haste, Josiah Proctor, on his way to the "Hart's Head," did not hesitate to make a detour towards Well Bank, rubbing his hands together in high glee, and presenting his speckless person at the door with a face as brimful of satisfaction as that of a mischievous schoolboy in the height of a frolic.

"Give the old dame time to cool," he murmured, as he lifted the knocker. "I am glad the family pie was baked before she could put her finger into it. What does she or Deb know of young children, in any

way or shape? Let her be content with spoiling Poll and Fido."

So radiant was his smile, so cordial his salutation, that Mrs. Cragg, who had heard from Martin of his presence at the funeral, was surprised out of her own gravity, returned his hand-shake with like heartiness, and in five minutes was chatting as easily with him as if there was nothing mournful in existence. It was very hard to do otherwise with Josiah Proctor, though he carried some sorrow under his spencer, and had felt a hard hand grip his heart many a time and oft. Blows dealt at his daughter had fallen heavily on him.

Who suspected anything of this? Not Mrs. Cragg, as she bade him be seated, and answered so cheerily his questions anent the health and conduct and progress of Jasper and Martin, well pleased to be able to furnish so good a report on the whole. Lost frills, and rent and muddy trousers, counted for nothing with Mrs. Cragg. So long as the lads broke no limbs in climbing trees or scrambling over scars, she over-

looked minor offences which the laundress and the seamstress could put right, and had some stiff arguments with her daughter on what the latter was wont to consider "false indulgence."

She recounted one or two boyish escapades with almost as much gusto as Mr. Proctor showed in hearing. But when he asked what was the ghost story to which Miss Cragg had darkly alluded, a change came over her features, and she gave the details, so far as known, with much seriousness, dwelling upon the consequences to the Thorpes and to Solomon Bracken, and the trouble it would be if she thought any of their boys were to blame.

"Then you don't fancy the spectre a reality?" propounded the lawyer, with a sly twinkle in his eye.

"Real! Preposterous! I wonder you put such a question to me."

"H'm! You would not be the first old woman—I beg pardon for the word—who believed in ghosts. Mrs. Statham is by no means a fool; but let anyone so much as

mention an apparition in her presence, and then see what she is made of! True, that reminds me," he abruptly added, "Mrs. Statham may be for making a ghost of me if I keep her waiting too long. Can I see the lads?"

Yes, he could see the lads, and, such being his wish, see them as they were.

The twang of a guitar led him to the boys' room, where he found Martin alone, with the instrument which had been his mother's, and which Mrs. Cragg said was the youth's chief companion, in his hands. He sat in a corner of the deep window-seat, with an old music-book before him, but evidently not consulting the notes, for his fingers seemed to wander mechanically over the strings, he meanwhile looking drearily out into the yard where the younger boarders were playing leap-frog, John Danson making a back for the frogs.

Martin did not stir until his guardian spoke, and then the light which irradiated his handsome countenance needed no interpreter. His visitor was surely welcome.

At first the latter bantered him on his unsocial habits, love of solitude, and melancholy music, urged the necessity for open-air exercise, and strove to elicit the cause of his isolation from his proper companions, Jasper among the rest.

Alternately frank and reserved in his answers, on the last point he was impenetrable, a deep crimson flush being his sole reply.

Nor was he any more communicative when questioned about the ghost which was troubling Giggleswick, and the kind lawyer took leave of his ward in some perplexity. Josiah Proctor was a deeper judge of human nature than Miss Cragg. He had an innate perception that there was something wrong, which it was her business to fathom, but he did not attribute that wrong to Martin Pickersgill; and when he left him, a crown-piece had passed into the olive-tinted palm, with the smiling intimation that it would serve to buy cat-gut. A very desirable "tip," for somehow Martin's guitar-strings broke unaccountably.

A thoughtful face the visitor carried with him across the passage, and through the large bright kitchen (where Nancy was setting the tea-things), down the steps into the yard, past out-buildings and grass-plots, along the hedge-side path, to the grassy orchard, and Apple-Tree Hall.

The door was closed, and there was a shuffling within before it was opened. When it was, Josiah's nostrils detected the reek of smoke which never came from the dying turf fire, and his sharp eye observed wet rings upon the rough table, as though some drinking vessel had there left its autograph. Four or five youths, in age varying from sixteen to eighteen, were seated or standing within, as if disturbed. Jasper Ellis, the junior, confronted his grandfather, with the door in his hand. He was, by virtue of his discretion, admitted to the freedom of the hall, and, that admission involving subservience to orders, he became general scout and lackey to the small establishment, hence his errand to the "Hart's Head"; but I have a notion he

turned his alacrity in service to his own account.

He had been detained at a secret conclave held in Apple-Tree Hall that morning, which Pickersgill had declined to attend, and he had taken for granted Mrs. Statham's companion to be Deborah; consequently Jasper was unprepared for his grandfather's appearance, and his face showed it.

But, if Mr. Proctor was dissatisfied, his manner did not reveal his private opinions. The jaunty way in which he asked if visitors were always kept so long waiting at the door for admission, or if they barred it to keep out the churchyard ghosts, and humorously suggested that a horse-shoe nailed thereon might prove equally effective, betrayed no suspicions he might entertain; whilst his "Snug place this! How do you amuse yourselves here?" certainly invited confidence other than the evasive "Oh! sometimes one way and sometimes another."

But he went on, "I see you have a game of cards now and then," and he pointed to the nine of diamonds lying face upwards

under the table. "Well, I like a quiet rubber myself, and see no harm in it if you play for love; but once make *money* an element in the game, and you will find another curse besides the curse of Scotland in the cards."

Oh, they never played for money, *never!* was almost an outcry, when other disclaimer was discovered to be useless.

"At all events, I trust Jasper does not play for stakes."

"What, Foxey! He's too close-fisted for that, sir," cried one. "Don't be afraid, sir, Foxey loves his money too well," vouchsafed Burton. "We don't play with juveniles," loftily observed another, a stranger to Mr. Proctor, who interrupted Jasper's flurried "Oh! grandfather, I hope you don't think I——" with what seemed an irrelevant question.

"Where is Martin? Why is he not among you?"

There was a general curling of lips.

"He has got a fit of sulks, as usual," blurted out Jasper.

"The Senhora prefers 'the light guitar, to our unmelodious society," sneered Robins.

A third suggested contemptuously that "Miss Pickersgill might be most likely found with the *other* young ladies."

A change came over their interlocutor. "I am glad my ward shows so much good taste, young *gentlemen*. I would prefer misses to mischief. Good afternoon." And, leaving them to digest his words at their leisure, he took Jasper by the shoulder, nor released his hold until he had him safe out of earshot in the bye-lane.

Then Josiah Proctor had a private word or two with his grandson, cards being the one topic, Martin Pickersgill the other. He was not angry, but he was terse and peremptory. What he had heard with his ears he had filtered through his understanding.

"Jasper," said he, quietly, "I am not satisfied with the way you spend your holidays. Young men of seventeen or eighteen are no associates for lads of fourteen. Young men with much pocket-money are no companions for boys with little. The boy is apt

either to sell himself or ruin himself. You had better cultivate the friendship of Martin Pickersgill. One good friend is worth more than a dozen doubtful comrades. I desire you will keep on friendly terms with Martin; it may be for your good hereafter." (He did not say "for your *interest*," if he meant it.) "And now, lad, look in my face and listen. You cannot have forgotten what comes of card-playing. I have taken you away from *want and penury*. I have promised to make a man of you, if you will let me; but, if I know you so much as shuffle a pack of cards again, I cast you off to sink or swim; so remember!"

And away he went, without another word, and without leaving any crown-piece in the palm that had been itching for it. Had he forgotten? Josiah Proctor was not a man with a defective memory.

He carried away with him from Gigglswick doubts requiring solution. The very nicknames of the two boys troubled him. Mrs. Statham poured instructions for her new will into muffled ears, for which the

rattling of the chaise had afterwards to be made responsible.

He had left the ghost mystery as he found it, but he decided that others had the matter in hand whom it concerned more nearly, as he imagined.

The old Grammar School was a plain, very plain oblong stone edifice, standing in the shade of ash and sycamore in the middle of a field below the northern wall of the churchyard. A portion of this field was used as a playground, and a path on a gradual incline under the shadow of the wall ascended from Love-lane to the Lancaster highway, guarded by a stile at either end. Stiles are of stone in this part of the world, and seldom more than a slab placed on end between uprights, or a narrow gap between stone posts only. There was a bare, bald aspect about the structure common enough among the dales and moorlands of Yorkshire. The small-paned, unadorned, square windows seemed to stare at you like two rows of eyes without lids. The stone was grey, and lichen-tinted with age, and Whit-

taker conjectures the building to have been originally the house of the Rood-priest, on the strength of a somewhat obscure inscription over the doorway—otherwise naked as that of a barn—in which one "Jacobum Carr" prayed "Alma Dei Mater" to defend him and his house from evil, and further indicated his priestly calling.

If the historian be right, then had the Rood-priest a house solid enough to resist the blasts of winter, and roomy enough to shelter wayfaring guests, but with no more pretensions to architectural beauty than a carpenter's workshop.

Yet, ugly and unpretentious as it was, Paley, the theologian, and other men of mark, found their Alma Mater within its walls, and the invocation with which the inscription closed, "Young and old praise the Lord," had in it the ring of prophecy. How many have had cause to "praise the Lord" for education under that roof since Jacobus Carr set up the stone!

The building had, however, an uninviting aspect at best of times. Especially uninvit-

ing was it on that Black-Monday morning in February when the grey skies opened their sluices over Settle, pelted the ground into mire, and put a damper on the most spirited youth who ever swung satchel behind him, or rejoiced that his exercise was safe under cover of a book-slate.

Young masters and misses, there was a tax upon paper in those days, and no steel pens, and rain was apt to wash the pencillings from slates. But woe betide the youth who had an illegible exercise that particular wet Monday, for never was "Old Howson" more disposed to test the suppleness of the lithe cane he carried in his pocket, doubled up snug and warm, ready for use, where none could tamper with it; never more inclined to fling the loose-leaved Eton grammar he kept on his desk at the head of the first boy who stammered over a declension, or was guilty of a false quantity, and to set him also the task of collecting and arranging the so scattered leaves.

Nor was Mr. Ingram as amiable as his wont. The deputation which had waited

on Mrs. Cragg, taking the cue from her, had likewise waited on Thomas Clapham, Esq., and Thomas Clapham had laughed more heartily than his clerical sire had done, grinning like one of Darwin's friends, as he declared he never enjoyed a ghost story so much before, that it was "a devilish good joke, an admirable farce," and, after indulging in considerable fun, seasoned with not a little blasphemy, wound up with a request that they would let him know when the storm they had brewed in their tea-pot had poured itself out.

A thin, monkey-faced, monkey-limbed man was Thomas Clapham, all legs and arms, as it were, raw-boned, and large-jointed. His loose, dark coat failed to conceal the angularity of his elbows, and his drab breeches and gaiters brought the knees into undue prominence. Mischief was born in him, had grown with his growth, and no doubt he had many an eccentric joke fathered upon him for which he was nowise responsible. But what cared he? The reputation was his glory. If he did any

damage, his purse was open to pay for it. And that he did damage was unquestionable, although, as a rule, his fun inclined more to coarseness than to viciousness, and sometimes may be it had better prompting than was apparent.

It was no easy task to tackle Thomas Clapham. He was slippery as an eel, and stood in no awe of his clerical catechists. He was not a poor man, or a tradesman, to care for either frowns or patronage; he was a land-owner, with wealth at command to throw away if he liked—and he very often did like, but he must have his jest out of it first. He was not greatly troubled with a sense of responsibility, and held that *golden* ointment was a panacea for all wounds. To him it was good fun to throw dust into the eyes of two schoolmasters, and to send them away in greater perplexity than before. It was also fun for him to stand in the rain at the vicarage gate that Monday morning, and salute Mrs. Cragg's boarders with loud "Hilloos!" as soon as they marched round the corner on

their way to school, writhing and grimacing suggestively, as if undergoing a smarting castigation from somebody's supple-jack.

CHAPTER XII.

HOWSON'S CANE.

WET morning though it was, the fire at Howson's end of the long school-room had only just been lit, that at Ingram's end was barely bursting into a blaze, and Betty Dyson and her daughter 'Liza were still in a bustle with their dusters on the magisterial chairs and desks on either platform, when Mrs. Cragg's contingent encountered a shoal of Settle and Stackhouse lads, wet and muddy with their long tramp, coming from the opposite end of the footpath, and they trooped in together at the open door pell-mell, with as much clatter and as little ceremony as a band of wild Indians.

There was a chorus of disappointment in every note of the gamut, "No fires?"

"I say, Mother Wellington, what is the meaning of this? School time, and neither fires nor room ready?" demanded Burton, authoritatively, as spokesman for the rest.

The woman began to apologise, "Whya, ye see, faither maks so mich wark for yan, sin he wor flaayed wi' t' ghoast, an' had t' fit, I cannot manish to leave haam ez suin ez I sud."

"That's no excuse for Lizzy Lie-abed, Mother Wellington," bawled Jasper, always ready to follow Burton's lead; but he punctuated his speech with a pretty loud "Oh!" as a pair of sharp nails met in his ear, and he knew by experience that "Old Howson" was behind him.

"And no excuse for bad language, sir! Apologise on the instant, or," and out of a coat pocket came the elastic cane with a very ominous swish.

At the first touch of the magic wand, Jasper stammered out something which Mr. Howson allowed to pass muster for an

apology. With a parting cut at the youngster's jacket, and another slash on his own desk to arrest attention, he threatened corporal punishment to any pupil who should apply offensive sobriquets to Betty or her daughter in his hearing, in the future. There was a smirk on the rosy face of 'Liza, but Betty had the worldly wisdom to drop a civil curtesy before retiring, and to intimate she "Didn't mich mind."

By this time Mr. Howson's own boarders had defiled in, and then the select band from Craven Bank, with Mr. Ingram at their head, followed by sundry stragglers from the village and elsewhere. There was a shuffling of feet whilst caps and coats were hung up, places taken at the two rows of seats ranged on either side, and a buzz and a hum as books were opened with a sudden show of assiduity.

The masters shook hands, and then, instead of separating, marched to Mr. Ingram's end for a few minutes, and stood together over the fire with their backs to the school, as if in consultation.

Hurried, low-voiced whispers ran down the forms, then silence fell on the school, for all, from the eldest pupil to the least, knew something was wrong, and some one was likely to smart for it; the theory of the period being that birch and cane made boys smart in more ways than one.

The masters turned their faces, and very awful faces they appeared to be that morning. The Rev. Rowland Ingram, Mr. Langhorne, and the Rev. John Howson remained standing. The cane of the latter gave a double rap on the desk of the former. All ears and eyes were alert.

Each monitor was called by name. Then orders were issued for the monitors to bring their respective classes to the front of the platform, and range them there, the juniors foremost, the seniors in the rear.

And then the arbiters of destiny scanned the phalanx of young faces with so keen a scrutiny that surely conscious guilt must have made some sign.

"Young gentlemen," began Mr. Ingram, "several months have elapsed since it was

my unpleasant duty to admonish you collectively from this platform. On that occasion, you will remember, the parish bone-house had been surreptitiously entered, fragmentary relics of the dead irreverently abstracted, and still more irreverently placed within the pews of the congregation. The Grammar School was, at that time, supposed to shelter the delinquent, and, seeing that the appeal I then made to your honour as gentlemen was effectual, the inference is conclusive. The offender or offenders *must have been in your midst.*"

Here the Rev. John Howson drew his cane affectionately between the forefinger and thumb of his right hand. There was a weary movement of feet, but not an eye dared glance aside lest the glance should be misconstrued.

"Now, young gentlemen," Mr. Ingram continued, "a much more serious offence has been perpetrated. I refer to the senseless device for terrifying the sexton. No doubt the effects have been more appalling than were contemplated. An honest, hard-

working man has been stricken down, and most probably disabled for life. The death of an estimable invalid lady has been precipitated. The fears of ignorance and superstition have been aroused. To check credulity the cheat must be exposed and punished. If the offenders be in our midst expulsion is the only remedy." He paused to give weight to the question which followed. "For the honour of the school, I demand to know who had a hand in getting up the ghost!"

There was many a deep-drawn breath, but never an answer.

The question was varied, but faces were set like flints in ignorance or wilfulness.

The masters looked disturbed. Possibly Thomas Clapham was the only one to blame after all!

Again—"Does no one among you know anything whatever of the matter?"

"Pickersgill, stand forth!" broke the silence like an electric shock.

The peering, half-shut eyes of the Rev. John Howson, wandering from face to face,

had rested for an instant on Martin, and seen the quick blood leap in answer to his brow. The frank, intelligent youth; the model scholar whose diligence defied the cane, stood high in his esteem. The reaction was swift; the usher felt he had been deceived.

A dozen hands were ready to thrust the fallen favourite to the front. It is the way of the world; and what is a public school but a world in embryo?

Gripping his blue jacket collar the usher jerked him on to the platform, amidst a fresh buzz of surprise and excitement.

The cane went swishing in the air, "Now, boy, confess! Who were your confederates?"

"I have nothing to confess, sir," answered Martin, but his voice was far from steady, and his eye glanced furtively at the cane. To him it was an instrument of utter degradation.

"Nothing to confess, sir," repeated the usher, severely. "Your guilty face condemns you. Name your accomplices at

once," and down came the cane in a couple of sharp strokes on Martin's supple form.

The boy's black eyes flashed like meteors. Before the cane again descended, the youth, whose whole soul was on fire, wrenched himself from the usher's grasp, and stood aside with panting nostrils and orbs aflame, confronting school and master.

"They whip slaves where I come from," he said, haughtily. "I am free-born, and have done no wrong, and will not submit to it."

"We will see that directly, young gentleman," cried the Rev. John Howson. "You shall be hoisted."

And hoisted he might have been but for little John Danson, who started forward from the ranks, crying piteously,

"Oh! please, sir, please, sir. It was not Pickersgill. It wasn't indeed, sir."

"Then who was it, Danson?" asked Rowland Ingram, kindly, but decidedly.

"Please, sir, I don't know, sir, but it wasn't Pickersgill," and the boy looked up imploringly.

"How do you know that?" demanded the usher.

"If you please, sir, I had had the ear-ache all that Saturday afternoon, and couldn't learn my collect for Sunday, and Pickersgill kept awake after we went to bed to teach it me in the dark. I sleep in his room, sir, and we went to bed before eight."

"I think there is some mistake here, Howson," remarked the head-master, in a quiet undertone. "Boys are not ubiquitous, and this sounds like truth."

"I'm afraid there is," assented the other, "and I'm not altogether sorry," in his satisfaction that a favourite pupil was exonerated, overlooking the temporary rebellion, for Howson was not a bad fellow in the main, though he did rap knuckles and dust jackets, and grope in pockets for forbidden miscellanea.

"You may go down, sir," to Martin, who obeyed slowly, casting, as he went, a searching, reproachful glance along the ranks to which he was returning, and when he took

his place there was a curl of contempt on his young lip.

Just then a queer, sly voice from the door broke in on the masters' conference. "Well, have you caught the grinning ghost?" and there was seen the apeish head and shoulders of Thomas Clapham thrust forward, his singular features twisted into a grotesque leer.

At once all heads were turned, and there were sounds of suppressed laughter.

"I say, when you *do*, send for me, good spirit or bad, I'm your man! Hurrah for hobgoblins!" and with the shout, and a parting grimace, head and shoulders disappeared.

Discipline and decorum were outraged. Burlesque had kicked out solemnity. The masters were annoyed and baffled, so suggestive was the grinning face in the doorway.

The boys were abruptly dismissed to their seats and their lessons. Not to admit defeat, the Rev. Rowland Ingram attempted a grave harangue prior to the dinner hour.

It was a failure, and he felt it. The subject was dropped. They had done with it.

In the playground it was otherwise. All there was commotion. Notes of interrogation and exclamation ran about in broadcloth and fustian. Pickersgill and Danson were surrounded, and no sooner had the masters disappeared than "Bravo, pluck!" "Brave lad!" "Bold young chap!" and sundry like eulogiums were emphasized on Martin's shoulders with many a hearty slap by Burton and other upper-class fellows. But he pushed through them all, and, taking John Danson by the hand, marched off homewards, looking neither to the right nor left. A sense of shame and injustice was rankling in his breast; he had no ear for greetings such as these.

At the foot of Bell Hill they came face to face with Allan and Edith Earnshaw, and he would have passed without a word, had not Allan and his sister put out their hands to invite the other's clasp, saying they had "just left Miss Cragg's." If her sable suit made Edith's face pale beside her brother's,

what a contrast did it present to Martin's! As they met, the hot blood surged upwards to his forehead, and tingled in his cheeks and ears as the thought swept over him, "*She* will hear! *She* will hear! Jasper is sure to tell her, and then she will despise me."

What was said by either he hardly knew. He heard her gentle voice as if in a dream, and when they had shaken hands and parted he went on up the bank, as much troubled with oppressive fears as if he had been eighteen instead of fifteen.

He had barely entered the house and hung up his cap in the hall, when Miss Vasey, who was coming downstairs with a maund, or basket, of linen for the next day's wash, with a motion of her head beckoned him towards her, away from John Danson, and, sinking her voice to a mysterious whisper, said,

"What have you been doing with your top sheet, Master Pickersgill?"

"Nothing," faltered he, his heart sinking at the question.

"Well, but it is all over dirty finger marks, and one corner has been trailed in mud."

"Yes, I know, I know; but, oh! Miss Vasey, I didn't do it, I really didn't."

"Well, but some one must have done it. How was it done?"

She had set down her basket inside the kitchen door, and followed him into the boy's room, where he flung himself into the window seat, and, leaning his arm against the woodwork, buried his face upon it to hide the tears springing into his eyes.

"How was it done?" she repeated, in the same undertone, but John Danson's thin ears caught every word.

"Oh, this is too bad! I do not—I cannot—I——Oh, do not ask me, Miss Vasey, Believe I would tell you if I——" the last word was choked in a convulsive sob.

Ann's tender heart could never withstand the test of tears. She bent over him and whispered for his comfort, "Never mind, Martin, you will tell me some day. I will

put the linen in steep for Sally, and then no one will be the wiser."

A grateful pair of eyes looked up at her, and she was repaid.

As she turned to go, she caught the eager gaze of John Danson fixed upon her face, as if full of a secret too big for him to keep.

The boy was following her, when a peremptory, half-choked "John!" arrested his steps.

If John Danson and Ann Vasey held any communion in private afterwards, it never transpired. One thing is certain, Johnny thenceforth came in for an extra share of good things, and Martin was higher in favour than before.

As she left the rather dark little room, the other boarders, who had been detained by Thomas Clapham on the way, came plunging in as gleeful as larks.

"Hillo!" cried Jasper, "if here isn't the Senhõra blubbering."

"Upon my word! Miss Pickersgill in tears!" exclaimed Robins, as if in lackadaisical surprise.

"Johnny dearie, haven't you a pocket-handkerchief for your dear young lady?" drawled a third named Wardrop, in tones of mock condolence.

They had rushed in together, and all seemed to speak together. Martin sprang to his feet, his tears gone.

"Cowards!" he hissed between his teeth, as he stood like a young lion at bay.

Burton, the last to enter, found Jasper within reach, and dealt him a smart cuff on the side of his freckled face, crying out, in a tone of command, "Drop that, Foxey, or it will be the worse for you, or any of you" —and he looked round—"who dare apply such epithets to Pickersgill again in my hearing. Never mind his tears, I feel that he is right, and we *are* a set of sneaks and cowards beside him."

"Here! I say!" remonstrated Robins.

"I repeat it, cowards," insisted Burton. "Pickersgill and Danson have the only manly hearts in the room." Then in another and rather patronising tone, "Yes, Johnny, you're a downright grateful little

fellow. I wish I could say the same for some one else."

"Do you mean me?" blustered Jasper Ellis, with an air of defiance.

"Yes, Foxey, I do; and if you give me any of your cheek, you shall have another ducking, and one you will remember."

"I say, my lord, have you done?" interposed Robins, sarcastically.

"No," was the prompt answer, and the young man stepped up to silent Martin. "Look you, Pickersgill, there's my hand, if you're not ashamed to take it. I tell you *I* am sorry for my conduct towards you, whatever others are."

The proffered hand was taken, and John Danson cut a caper at the prospect of such an ally, just as Miss Cragg opened the door to say that the dinner bell had rung twice.

This altercation had not been carried on in whispers, and it is likely that she had heard much of it, and waited her time to interfere. As a rule the boys were left to settle their own disputes, and they pretty generally righted themselves.

CHAPTER XIII.

FISHING-TACKLE.

GRATITUDE and ingratitude. Do many of us exhibit the former? Will any plead guilty of the latter? Shall I show why Burton connected the words with his young schoolmates? If so, I must go back to Martin Pickersgill's first examination before the governors of the Grammar School, when he was but a neophyte.

The twelfth of March, or Fig-day, was set apart for the examination of the scholars, and was a day of jubilation when the panting little hearts had got through their ordeal. The governors met at the school. Several boys—mostly the heads of classes—stood up before them and recited passages

from Greek or Latin authors, and then such of the governors as happened to have kept up their acquaintance with those languages would follow them book in hand; sometimes cross-questioning uncomfortably at the close.

It so happened that amongst the oral traditions of the school had been handed down sundry free renderings of classical subjects, for private indulgence in oratory or vocalisation—when masters were not supposed to hear.

Some of these, set to old rollicking airs, which Burton trolled out with considerable spirit, had been caught up by Martin—for instance:

"Queen Dido sate at her palace gate,
Darning a hole in her stocking, O;
She sighed as she drew her needle through,
While her foot was a cradle rocking, O,
For Æneas the soldier lad—"

I have said that Martin Pickersgill was intelligent and diligent. The latter fact was due in part to the inborn horror of the cane which he had brought with him from

Jamaica, where slavery, and consequently *whipping*, was in full force, and not even its frequent use on the white skins in the school could obliterate his early impression that it was meant only for a degraded race. He had also brought with him no small share of the planter's hauteur, to which the proud blood of the Spanish lady and the independent blood of the Yorkshireman had, I presume, contributed. Time toned it down somewhat, but those were comparatively early days when he stood to be cross-questioned by one of the governors of the school, no less a personage than Lawyer Hartley. The old gentleman, dressed in a blue coat with brass buttons, with drab vest and breeches, seemed to Martin to make quite a dead set at him through the heavy gold-rimmed spectacles, which came down from his head when a question was asked, and went up again when it was answered.

At all events, he kept the boy long under inquisition, and at length began to put questions in advance of his class. Martin must have felt somewhat like a frog under a har-

row, for even the Rev. John Howson looked anxious for the credit of his scholar. But, thanks to persevering industry, the tyro acquitted himself pretty fairly. Finally, as a test and a poser, the old gentleman turned to the first pastoral of Virgil, and bade the youngster translate it.

Pickersgill took the book and read out with sufficient clearness the first line, but for a translation out came, with the facility of familiarity, one of Burton's burlesques.

"Eh!" said the examiner, with a backward jerk of his head, before it came as suddenly down to make a closer examination of the translator's face, which rapidly reddened as the gold spectacles went up to the top of the governor's head, and his uncovered optics peered curiously into those of the boy, now evidently beginning to chafe under undue pressure and scrutiny both.

A shrewd observer was Lawyer Hartley.

"Well, my boy," said he, drily, "don't put yourself out, but if you can give me the Latin for goose, you'll do."

Martin, rightly enough, took this as an

insinuation that he was a goose, and, his temper up, replied hotly and without premeditation, but with considerable emphasis,

"I might *anser, senilis antiquus!*"

Instead of getting his ears boxed, as he certainly deserved and expected, immediately the words had passed his lips, the old gentleman turned his head with a comical smile to the usher, and said, "Hear that, Howson? He'll leave this class!" to the no small relief of the lad himself, who had been amazed at his own temerity. He had, however, cooled down, and regained his equanimity by the time the buns and parcels of figs were distributed, and was as alert and eager as any when the residue of the figs were thrown in their midst to be scrambled for according to custom.

The school broke up after the announcement of promotions and exhibitions. Martin was hurrying off with the news of his promotion, when his badgering examiner called him back, saying he wanted him to carry a note into Settle.

"Well, what are you going to have?"

was the query of Harrison, the Settle shopkeeper, when Martin handed in the note. A surprised stare, and the ejaculation "Eh?" was the only answer. The note was shown, and, to his delight and astonishment, an order for fishing-tackle was there on the bearer's behalf.

Running home, with all speed, to Well Bank, to exhibit his prize in high glee, he found that while he had been in Settle his friend of the gold-rimmed spectacles had been there along with Mr. Howson, had asked who and what he was, promised to keep an eye on him, and said the youngster was pretty sure of an exhibition if he continued equally persevering. Mrs. Cragg patted Martin's black head as she repeated these praises, and admired his fishing-tackle, but he blushed as much with modesty and bashfulness as pride, for, on a stool beside the old lady, sat a dark-eyed maiden nine years old that day, who had been "kept in," to pick out and re-mark some defective letters on a yellow sampler, and she smiled as if she had been a pleased listener, too.

That was his first introduction to Edith Earnshaw.

It was also his introduction to the river Ribble as an angler, for be sure he lost no time in testing the quality of his tackle, and many a dish of small trout did he lay as an offering at the old lady's feet, Allan Earnshaw and Wardrop taking him in tow and showing him how to bait his hooks and manage his lines.

Two or three years went by. There had been many changes. Jasper Ellis and John Danson had, at long intervals, both entered the Grammar School and Miss Cragg's household, and the former had been removed from Pickersgill's room to make way for the latter, who was at once given into Martin's charge—a smaller image of himself when he first landed in Liverpool.

On Wold Fell, some fourteen or fifteen miles from Settle, may

"Be traced a little brook to its well-head,
Where, amid quivering weeds, its waters leap
From the earth, and, hurrying into shadow, creep,
Unseen, but vocal, in their deep-worn bed,"

to join another and another tiny rill, until on crossing Geerstones the newly-born Gale-beck is strong enough for re-baptism, and, as the river Ribble runs on thence, still feeding and feeding from many a runnel and rillet, as it goes, through many a gill and cave and chasm, over many a deep pot-hole, leaping in cascades, foaming over rocky boulders, deepening and widening from "Pennighent's proud foot" to Ribblesdale, where, here and there, under the ramparts of the lofty scars and crags, its limpid waters have been utilised for mills, till, gliding under Settle Bridge, it spreads and flows and winds its way under the verdant umbrage of fair trees, fertilising and beautifying pasture and landscape in its meandering course towards Lancashire.

The region of the Ribble's birth and growth is peculiar and mysterious. There waters come and go, no one can tell whence or whither. The waters of Malham Tarn and Cove are of this class; and twice within record the river Ribble has stopped in its course, or suddenly ceased to flow (as did

Jordan of old), leaving for several hours a dry bed; then, whilst wonder was at its height, came dancing merrily along again as coolly as though its temporary disappearance was nobody's business but its own.

What a surprise it must have been to the fish and fishermen when the stream disappeared in one of these freaks; but no such catastrophe occurred whilst Martin Pickersgill held rod and line over its rocky bed. Yet another and a different catastrophe might have occurred had he not been angling there, which would have changed the current of my story, perhaps sealed its fountain altogether.

Some distance up the dale was a spot where trees spread a grateful shadow over bank and stream, and notably an aged sycamore which long had held an outstretched arm, as if in benediction over the translucent water, where trout and salmon sported pleasantly. Or it might be in silent warning the leafy arm pointed with downward fingers.

Pellucid was the water, and smooth the

rocky bed beneath, but, like a danger-signal, a round black spot marked a swallow hole of depth unfathomed, and hereabout the fattest trout were said to congregate.

It chanced one holiday that Martin, having become the possessor of a new and better line, handed over his early one to Danson, and the pair set forth to try them, accompanied by Wardrop and Jasper.

Johnny, as was the wont of the younger lads, mounted the tree and crept along the overhanging bough, where, lying perdu at full length, his baited line dangled below. Soon his float disappeared, and a sharp tug told that he had hooked a monster, and that his tackle was in danger. The little fellow had no mind to lose either line or fish. He called to Jasper, who was idly looking on, to run for Wardrop with his landing-net.

Instead, regardless of frequent cautions from their elders never to venture upon the bough two at a time, and regardless of John's cry for him to keep back, Jasper was up the tree and along the bough with all

speed, when crack! it broke off short and fell with the boys on it into the river.

Their cries, the splash, attracted Martin, then unhooking a fish some little distance away. "Hold fast," he called. Down went his line, off went jacket and boots, he was in the water and after them in a trice, whilst they held on to the bough like grim death, as it made for the black "pot," then floated safely over it and swept on down stream, dipping John Danson and Jasper in and out as the current swayed it in its course. Martin was a bold swimmer, but he had the treacherous black hole to avoid; that past, he struck out and gained upon them. Not too soon, for fright and the drenching were telling upon them both, and they might not have held on much longer.

With a warning word still to "Hold fast," he caught the drifting bough, caused it to swerve, and gradually steered it to the bank where the water was shallow, and Wardrop was ready to wade in and grasp the branches whilst Martin released the two

half-drowned lads and helped them to dry land.

And helped them, moreover, to land their fish, for John had held fast, even to his rod, and lo! a fine salmon trout was there to compensate for a ducking which, but for Martin, might have been a drowning.

There was no going home to Miss Cragg, drenched and dripping as they were. Martin fished out two caps as they were floating farther down the stream, and careful Jasper was loudly deploring their loss. Then he recommended a run to the lime kilns at the end of the scars to dry themselves, picking up his own boots and jacket by the way, whilst Wardrop was left in charge of fish and tackle.

They were not in much better plight after the hasty drying, so much had broad cloth shrunk, and there was a lamentable tale to be told to abate Miss Cragg's displeasure when they did get home with their fish as a propitiatory offering. But little said Martin of his own exploit. Indeed he scarcely gave it a second thought.

Yet it was to this Burton had referred as a "ducking" when he reproached Ellis with ingratitude.

CHAPTER XIV.

LETTERS HOME.

THE ghost was laid—in a sense. Thomas Clapham twitted the reverend gentlemen at the head of the Grammar School with their small success in ghost hunting, and they, fully persuaded that he was the offender, proceeded no further with their official inquiry; and it somehow got wind that Parson Clapham's son had played the "boggard."

Yet even that theory had its disputants. It was urged that young Mr. Clapham had been to Skipton market that very day to get rid of a broken-winded horse, coming back with a sound one.

Others—Jasper Ellis for one—affirmed

that he was back a few minutes after seven o'clock, and had been spoken to by him at the "Hart's Head" door, on horseback, before he rode home. He had had plenty of time for mischief if he were so minded, and he was well primed for it.

Then the "Black Horse" claimed the company of Thomas Clapham for the rest of the evening; but again came the reminder that the "Black Horse" had a door opening conveniently into the churchyard, and, if the churchwardens found it convenient on the Sunday, some one else might find it convenient on the Saturday.

All these speculations and arguments found their way through Betty Dyson's open shop door to the disabled sexton. But the dogmatic old man was not to be argued out of his original belief; and to have convicted him of affright at anything less than the supernatural, would have brought shame on his bravery, and been a greater affliction than his paralysed frame.

The end of it all was to place fear as a sentinel at either end of the path beneath

the northern wall of the churchyard, and to leave Solomon Bracken and superstition triumphant.

Such was the condition of things when Allan Earnshaw returned to his high stool in the counting-house of Messrs. Metcalfe and Polloc (situated in close proximity to the Coloured Cloth Hall and Boar Lane, and not far away from Briggate, the main artery of Leeds), the bearer of sundry complimentary messages from Mrs. and Miss Cragg, and of a quarto-sheet of gilt-edged letter paper, duly folded and sealed, containing Miss Grace Metcalfe's private budget of news to "Dear Papa and Mamma," accompanied by one or two little tributes of her affectionate regard.

He also bore with him, under another cover, a memento or two of a still more private nature; one in the shape of a book-mark, fashioned after a bygone style, with cardboard, coloured paper, and purse twist, the two former so deftly over-wrapped and interwoven with the twist as to present on the upper surface the pale blue paper

motto, "Forget me not," on a dark blue silken background; the other, a trifle, now utterly out of date and use, inasmuch as it belonged to the time when watches were made with separate outer and inner cases, and ornamental watch-papers were laid as preservatives between the twain. Watch-papers, however, were not always of *paper*. I remember one so-called—a smooth disc of mouse-skin, and the one Allan carried away within his own watch was just a bit of flimsy muslin on which was wrought, as on a sampler, but with nothing less sentimental than the marker's own auburn hair, the touching inscription,—

a couple of hearts and a true lover's knot in red and blue silk being added for picturesque completeness.

It is needless to inquire how often the watch was opened to ascertain the time, during the journey to Leeds, or how seldom referred to within the walls of the counting-house, where curious clerks had eyes to see, and a stern parent had suspicions to be awakened.

Alas! for sixteen-year-old chivalry, with the secret of a fifteen-year school-girl in its keeping! And, alas! for the silly school-girl, whose precocity runs so far ahead of common sense!

Although a good premium had been paid with him, Allan Earnshaw was then but junior clerk at Metcalfe and Polloc's, there being other rungs in the clerkly ladder between himself and the head man, Mr. Sheepshank, in whose home at Woodhouse arrangements had been made for him to board, in order that he might have the advantage of elder supervision after business hours; and Mr. Sheepshank had reported

well of the youth alike to Mr. Thorpe and to his principals. Youth is elastic and business imperative; the little memorials of Miss Grace exercised a consoling influence, and in time the restless speculation what the unspoken words of his dying mother might have been ceased to usurp the throne of thought.

Years before, he and his sister had dreamed dreams of a future in which they were to be all-in-all to each other, when he, a man, should make a cottage home for her, and they should dwell together, bachelor-brother and maiden-sister, serenely happy in the good they would diffuse.

The bustle of the busy town soon dissipated that placid dream. He remembered it but to say "that was a dream for drones," and whilst busy with pen and ink, copying London and foreign price-lists for the firm, looked ahead to the time when he should enter the wool-market with his samples and have clerks at his command. And now the reading of his dead father's will had given a basis for the edifice he was building in his

brain. What might not a man of industry and energy accomplish with seven thousand pounds as a lever at his command? He would make himself master of every detail in the business, and then—the vision of Fortune's palace, in which the goddess was a sort of sublimed Grace Metcalfe, would be rudely dispelled by a reminder from a senior that whilst he was chewing the feather of his pen he was more likely to make blots than figures with the nib.

This was not often. His general dreaming-time was the hour he spent in his own room between supper and bed; or, being an early riser, before the dressing-glass in a morning, when he made so much ado over shaving away down, and brushing his curling locks (a dark compromise between sable and chestnut) into orthodox trim. Not that he was vainer of his good looks than any other young fellow of his age, but his comates in the office were studious of their appearance, and it naturally followed that he must be so too. Fresh from the country, he was desirous to shape himself after the

town models. There was a faint sensation of regret that his mourning suit had been made in Settle. Leeds, in respect to fashion, might be far away from London—but Settle! how much more remote!

Of course, he wrote home to announce his safe arrival; negligence on such a point would have been inexcusable. And, perhaps it was also of course, he sent word to Miss Metcalfe, *viâ* his sister Edith, that "the small package of which he had been the honoured bearer, had been received with the very *fullest* appreciation;" a message she innocently delivered, all unaware that the words had a double meaning.

About a fortnight later, another missive was received from Allan, closely written on the three available sides, and even on those portions of the quarto sheet which were hidden in the folding, for be it remembered envelopes were not in use; the back page was the cover, and the address formed a part of the latter. It may be well to make an extract:—

"Who do you think walked into our office

yesterday afternoon? Who but my old stage-coach acquaintance. He seems to be here, there, and everywhere, and to care no more for his personal appearance in Leeds than in the country. Mr. Polloc, for whom he asked, was not in. 'Then I'll wait,' said Mr. Wilson, and, without more ado, he came over to the long, high desk at which we clerks were seated, and, planting himself close to my elbow, in the angle formed by the desk and the wooden partition, the upper part of which is glazed, looked straight down the desk at our new clerk, Basil Buttermere, from under those great rough eyebrows of his, so curiously and searchingly through his heavy silver spectacles, that (as I saw with half an eye across the ledgers) Buttermere quite changed colour and grew uneasy under the scrutiny, as well he might. I know it would have put me out of countenance to have been stared so hard at. Yet Buttermere must be over thirty, and is not the sort of fellow one would expect to be over-sensitive. He makes such a boast of being 'a man of the world.'

"After the old fellow had made such use of his eyes, I was not surprised to hear him use his tongue. His mode of address was, however, as queer as himself. He began, still leaning against the desk, and talking across the backs of myself and Yeadon, until I saw Mr. Sheepshank grow fidgety at the interruption.

"'Well, Mr. Buttermere, and how have you used that oyster, the world, since I saw you last? And how has the world used *you* all these years?'

"'Oh! middling,' was the answer.

"'And how is that delicate creature, your *wife?*'

"I did not know until then that he was married.

"'Oh! middling,' was again the only answer, and I thought somehow these replies seemed forced from the man, for he is not generally so reserved, and his voice had not its natural tone.

"'And how long is it since you left London?'

"'About four months.'

"'Ah! and you have been here three months, almost as long as our young friend here' (meaning me). 'I trust you will both' (and he seemed to lay an emphasis on the word) 'do your duty in the face of God and my friend Polloc, as fine a man and good a master as any in Leeds; rather lenient, perhaps, but you will find his partner, Mr. Metcalfe, not a man to be trifled with by any means, as Mr. Sheepshank there will testify.'

"'Quite right, Mr. Wilson, our senior is not to be trifled with: but he never fails to reward merit,' was the testimony elicited.

"'Well, who is going to trifle with him?' grumbled out Buttermere.

"'No one, I hope,' and the old man's eyes shot a keen glance into the other's, scarcely raised from the book before him. 'Your wife in Leeds?'

"'Yes.'

"'Any more children?'

"'Two.'

"'Perhaps you will favour me with your

present address. And perhaps you would like to know how I became aware that you were here, and how long you had held your situation. I chanced to hear so much as I passed through Skipton on my last journey.'

"It was my turn to change colour, and I think Basil Buttermere observed it as he passed behind Yeadon to Mr. Wilson a slip of paper on which he had scrawled something. Like lightning it had flashed over my mind that I had named the new clerk to Lawyer Proctor, during dinner at the 'Devonshire Arms,' and that Mr. Wilson, then sitting opposite, dropped his knife and fork with a clatter which caught Mr. Proctor's attention, and brought on some discourse about 'Honest John,' whom it seemed he had formerly known, when in some sort of trouble or other. You may recollect, Edith, I mentioned this to you, the day he was at Ivy Fold.

"Well, the old gentleman no sooner got the paper, and cast his eyes over it, than he took out of his top-coat pocket a great

pocket-book bursting with papers, and laid the address very carefully within. Then he turned to me with a sharpness that made me start, and spoil the figure I was putting down, and began to ask all sorts of questions, about home and school, my studies and my schoolfellows, and I think he too gave a little start when I named Jasper Ellis. At all events, he asked me the name over again, aud where Jasper came from, and who his father was, and seemed disappointed that I only knew him as Lawyer Proctor's grandson. You know, Edith, Jasper never did talk about his father and mother. Mr. Wilson went on to ask me where I lived, and said he was glad to hear that I was under Mr. Sheepshank's fatherly care; it was so very sad for a lad of my age to be cast adrift, as it were, on the perilous sea of a great town, where there were so many stony rocks, so many sharks, and other sea-monsters and temptations, ready to snap up an unwary youngster. Then he asked what books I read? what I did with my evenings? and if I had any com-

panions? Then he launched out on the necessity for all young men to *avoid evil companions*, said there was no companion like a good book; asked if I had a Bible? bade me read it thoughtfully, and to make myself well acquainted with Proverbs, on the first chapter, tenth verse, of which he laid great stress, telling me to search it out when I got home. I find it is, 'My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.' He might have thought I was in some particular danger, he was so emphatic. At last he wound up with a suggestion that I should become a member of the Mechanics' Institution, and attend the lectures, use the library and reading-room, and join any evening class likely to advance my education, 'For remember, young sir,' he said, 'education does not end with school or college; it only begins there, tutors lay only the foundation, the superstructure must be reared bit by bit in the outer world, and, if you can avoid the whip of the sharp schoolmaster, Experience, by your own prudence, so much the better. Never mind difficul-

ties, press along the straight path onward and upward; no good effort's *w*holly lost! Remember, I say *w*holly.'

"Mr. Polloc, who had come in unobserved, here touched him on the arm, and, as they went into the private office together, I was struck with the contrast between them, he so bent in the shoulders, loose and shambling in his joints and gait, so homely and untidy in his attire; and neatly-dressed Mr. Polloc, who is fully six feet high, so erect and dignified, so noble in his bearing, with fine features and a lofty forehead, that only seems to want a crown to make him every inch a king. Before the glass door of the inner office well closed upon them, I heard Buttermere, who looked uneasy, mutter grumpily, 'Thank God we are rid of the old bore at last! I wish he'd keep his lectures for the dirty mechanics he's so plaguey fond of. Nobody wants him here hindering business.'

"And—what do you think? If Buttermere did not stop me on my way home, after closing, to ask, peremptorily, what I

had been saying about him! And to advise me in future to keep my tongue within my teeth in public rooms, or I might do more harm in a minute than I could mend in a life! I did not like his domineering way, but I think his advice worth taking; and I also think of taking Mr. Wilson's advice, and joining the Institution, for I find the evenings dull here, with no young friends, and no books I care for."

Allan's long communication ended abruptly, with a signature half under the seal, for lack of space; although he had spent two nights thereon, and used his neatest calligraphy, to avoid the necessity for an extra half sheet, which would have made a double letter of it, and consequently have doubled the sevenpenny postage fee.

He had written in the newness of surprise and perplexity; dropping all sense of uneasiness into the box with his epistle, and, it may have been, folded it up in the paper, for the letter was read twice over, both by Edith and Mr. Thorpe—a sort of misgiving of the clerk, Buttermere, creeping over their

minds—and in Edith's coupled with a wonder why Mr. Wilson had been so inquisitive about Jasper Ellis.

CHAPTER XV.

ARCHIBALD THORPE'S ANTECEDENTS.

ALLAN EARNSHAW'S long letter had given Archibald Thorpe's memory a sharp fillip; and recalled two promises made to John Wilson during his somewhat untimely visit at Ivy Fold.

Virtually, that visit had been made in the interests of popular education. John had the history of the movement at his fingers' ends, and could tell how the Leeds Mechanics' Institution and others had sprung up in the north since Dr. George Birkbeck, who was born in Settle, had conceived the idea and founded the first of them in London some five or six years before. And to incite Mr. Thorpe to follow somewhat in his

wake, and help on the cause of these helps to the working classes, he urged that a man's time was not his own; he was bound to use it for the good of others; that his talents were not lent to be buried in a napkin or a country village; that he had a light within him not to be hid under a bushel, but to be held forth for the illumination of outer darkness; and that, if he would prepare and deliver a few homely lectures on botany or geology, gratuitously, to the members of such institutions, he would be a public benefactor; the seeds of knowledge so sown would spread and fructify for all time to come; and he hammered the whole down with his favourite mottoes: "The liberal soul deviseth liberal things," and "No good effort's *wholly* lost."

The enthusiast had carried his point, and promise the first was given. The second concerned Allan. With an interest in the young fellow utterly inexplicable to the step-father, but which Honest John explained as arising from the pity he always felt when he saw a frank, open-hearted lad

sent from a quiet country home alone into the whirl of a large manufacturing town; he dilated on the dangers which beset the path of such a youth, the traps and pitfalls in the way of the unwary, dwelling especially on the danger of one so apparently impulsive and impressionable associating indiscriminately with his unknown fellow-clerks. Mr. Thorpe, who had more knowledge of plants and stones than of humanity, opened his eyes in amazement, and wished he had not been so ready to second Allan's desire "to go out into the world and make a man of himself." He did more, he promised before his step-son went back to his desk to give him the best counsel and caution in his power.

Genuine promises both. But Archibald Thorpe was an absent man, in great mental anguish at the time, and, between the excitement of Mrs. Statham's appearance at the funeral, her remarks during the reading of Mr. Earnshaw's will, and his discovery that his home was no longer his home, both promises drifted into oblivion.

The executors, of course, took the matter of tenancy out of Allan's hands. It was settled that Mr. Thorpe should continue at Ivy Fold, paying such a rental only as might satisfy his self-respect, though Allan grumbled, and said it was a shame his step-father should pay any rent at all. Arrangements were also made for Edith to remain in her old home. But the business connected with all this was so uncongenial that the widower's palpable duties as mentor floated into oblivion.

And here, lest Archibald Thorpe and his position should be misunderstood, let me sketch him as he sat in his sable suit, with Allan's letter in his hand, pondering its contents.

He was a fair-haired, broad-shouldered, wiry man, on the shady side of forty, with a massive forehead, and deep-set, speculative eyes that always seemed lost in a dreamy mist indoors; but only set him on the mountain or the crag, and those same eyes could waken up to see the tiniest plant, the faintest outline of a fossil.

And what if he lacked superfluous flesh? Think you he could have burdened himself with so many "specimens," vegetable and mineral, if he had been of the Daniel Lambert order? And what if his long-armed, short body, narrowed from shoulders to feet like a wedge, and his head, narrowing from forehead to chin, was set on the square shoulders like a smaller wedge?—he was agile and tireless as a boy, and, if incipient crows'-feet were gathering at the corners of his eyes, they came of thought, not time.

His botanical tastes had developed early, in spite of home discouragements. His father, a country squire of an old and pronounced type, who rode hard, drank hard, swore hard, and fed in a like ratio, and who leased to strangers the coal-mine on his estate, had more feeling for oxen and swine, dogs and horses, than for science and study. He pitched the lad's plant treasures into the fire, prohibited any more "weeding," enforced his prohibition with his horse-whip, and held Archibald's younger brother up as a model of all that was manly, because

he could ride his horse at a stone fence, and take the leap flying. But when the Squire died of repletion after a hunting-feast, and the family papers came to be looked over, it was discovered that the Thorpes were but usurpers, that the dead Squire held, by no law but possession, the estate of a sister's son, who had been his ward, had been cruelly used, and was said to have run away before he came of age, and never to have been heard of since.

The discovery filled Archibald Thorpe with dismay. There was a fierce quarrel between the brothers. The Squire had executed deeds of gift conveying the estate to Archibald, the coal-mine to Robert; but the former renounced the gift, and advertised in the *Times* for the lost heir. No heir put in a claim, but the elder refused to hold, and Robert, with a chuckle, laid his hands on all. There was, however, a small property in another county, to which Archibald had honest right—a share in a Weardale lead-mine—and so, content with a diminished patrimony, he turned his back

upon his brother and his cousin's broad acres for ever.

To Weardale he transported all his own belongings, and, shortly afterwards, mounting a knapsack on his square shoulders and a wallet by his side, became a wanderer.

Far and wide, over hill and dale, he strayed, but rarely among the haunts of men. He was a true student of nature, an observer and collector. With occasional returns to Weardale, such was his life for years. But he began to weary of his wandering, and to long once more for a settled home where he could turn his observations to account, when, as Providence would have it, he came upon Mrs. Earnshaw in her widow's weeds, sitting by the Ebbing and Flowing well, one sultry evening early in July.

Her two children were gathering flowers close at hand, Allan scrambling up the face of the scar to gather for his sister the nodding plumes of Solomon's-seal growing in the clefts, whilst she below had filled her little hands from more accessible stems with

the yellow pimpernel, the red wood-betony the azure forget-me-not, the purple fox-glove, wild thyme and basil.

The traveller, laden with spoils from the rocks and caves of Ingleton and Clapham, stopped to rest and refresh himself at the wayside well, offering as an apology for intrusion that he was a stranger desirous to quench his thirst.

The sparkling water was up to the brim. He dipped the leathern cup of his flask into the well, and was about to drink when his uplifted eye fell upon the widow's son clinging to the rock in a most perilous position. Down went the flask, and up went the man only in time to catch the boy as he was falling. How sincere and tearful were the mother's thanks may be imagined.

And the stranger's surprise may be imagined too, when he found an empty well where he had left a full one, not to say his disappointment. But while the interesting widow gave such explanation of the phenomenon as she was able, up rose the coquettish water swiftly, to sink again almost

before a draught could be secured, and the astonished traveller, lost in abstraction, seemed to question the fitful waters and his own brain.

A second service the dusty pedestrian did the lady before they left that well-side, snatching from the very lips of the wandering little girl a bunch of berries she had gathered for black currants, undeterred by their odour.

It was the fruit of the *Hyoscyamus Niger*, the deadly properties of which the botanist explained to the children and their mother as they walked together down the dusty road towards the "Hart's Head," where the pedestrian was left, with grateful thanks, to stop for the night.

He stopped not one night but many, and in the end took up his permanent abode at Ivy Fold, when the young widow blossomed forth as a bride for the second time, to the unmitigated disgust of Aunt Statham and others, who set Archibald Thorpe down as a needy adventurer. He was simply reticent about his private affairs.

But he was liberal, unobtrusive, and unassuming, and soon lived that down, whilst the very nature of his pursuits made him friends among local scientific investigators—Dr. Burrow foremost; for long before this he had added geology to botany, and he had a rich field for study and discovery around him in Craven.

The litter of leaves and dirty stones disconcerting housewifely Mrs. Thorpe, the little sitting-room she had once called her own was surrendered to him, and there he gathered around him not only his own collections, but the works of geological pioneers, perplexing his mind with their conflicting theories. Then, as he made discoveries and deductions of his own, he entered upon a sea of controversy and correspondence, which took the edge off his trouble during his wife's long illness, but left the children too much without elder supervision.

Allan's letter had set the scientific enthusiast thinking for the time being; but the lines of thought crossed and diverged, and

soon his fears for his stepson were lost in the reminder of his other promise to Honest John, and in the gathering up of ideas and the marshalling of facts for the lectures to be written.

He put on his hat, left the letter on the table, and went out, at first to pace backwards and forwards, with his hands clasped behind him, to and fro in Love Lane, then opened the wicket which gave access to the Cateral Hall grounds, within which, close at hand, a picturesque waterfall leaped and frisked as it fell from rock to rock with cadences and murmurs so musical as to lull the soul to contemplation. There, though the over-arching trees were bare, he took his stand, with his hands behind him, in sheer forgetfulness of time, until the whoops and hurrahs of schoolboys let loose recalled him to earth, and making his way back home, the door of his study closed upon him, until Dora was sent to remind him that tea was waiting, and Janet impatient. Dora never waited to tap at his door; in she ran boldly, secure of welcome; her voice acted

like a charm; the unfledged lecturer's pen went down on the instant; the child went up in his arms, and so they found their way to the tea-table. And, though such was pretty generally the manner in which father and daughter entered the "house" at meal-times, something closely allied to pain crept round Edith's heart that afternoon, and smote her with the desolation of orphanhood. The one word "danger" in Allan's letter had filled her with vague fears for him, and perhaps that had made her more than ordinarily sensitive to the reserve between her stepfather and herself.

Yet, as she lifted the child into the high chair that had once been her own, and did her best to accommodate the whimsies of little miss, first with regard to her place at table, and then in her likes and dislikes, no one could have suspected that she was crushing bitterness and impatience down, with self-reminders of the promise made to her mother.

She had not an easy task before her. A child, slightly delicate, had been rendered

more so by indulgence. She had been humoured lest a cry of hers should reach the sick-room; and now Mr. Thorpe petted her the more, as his lost wife's legacy, and seemed inclined to perpetuate the mischief, and render futile Edith's attempts at discipline. She would soon have grown unbearable had not Janet Carr sturdily set her face against "spoilin' t' lile bairn."

It chanced, about a week or two afterwards, Dora had been especially fractious all the day, "gitten aat at wrang side o' th' bed," as Janet phrased it; had been cross and troublesome when Edith dressed her in the morning—a process always carried on before the warm "house" fire so long as the cold weather lasted—had over-set the bowl of water on the white hearth, as a protest against being washed; had kicked off her socks and shoes as fast as Edith put them on, and, when the latter rose from her knees to recover a stray shoe, scampered, half-dressed, over the stone floor, with bare feet, regardless of her sister's expostulations or fears lest she should take cold, dancing

round the big table, and mocking at attempts to catch her.

Half this had been fun, half wilfulness, but it was of almost daily occurrence, and Janet had not Edith's patience.

Coming from the back-kitchen, whither she had gone with her floor-cloth after mopping up the wet hearth, the energetic woman caught at the child, lifted her up, and, with a smart shake, set her down again on the chair by the fire, with a sharp intimation that she had better be still.

The shake, and still more Janet's determined tone, produced submission, and, though Miss began to whimper and pout, she submitted, after a sort, to have her feet and body clothed; but no sooner did Edith begin to remove the curl-papers from her silken hair, and attempt to comb out her curls, than the young vixen roared out, "You're lugging me, you're lugging me," ending with a roar which brought Mr. Thorpe upon the scene.

At once Dora rushed sobbing to his arms,

and to his concerned inquiry, "What is the matter, my pet?" blubbered forth, "Edie's been cross, and been lugging me." She would have liked to say Janet had shaken her, but she had her share of childish cunning, and judged it unsafe to tell tales of that individual.

"I wish, Edith, you would be more careful with Dora, you know how tender and delicate she is," remonstrated Mr. Thorpe, not too well pleased at having been called downstairs with only one side of his face shaven, the other all lather, and a slight wound on his chin. His fears for Dora had driven away all thought for his own appearance in the first instance. Now it annoyed him.

"Indeed, father," pleaded Edith, "I did take all the care I could, but she would not keep her head still, and if I hurt her I could not help it."

"Well, lile Dora will be still now, won't she, darling?" said he, fondling the pettish child, and smoothing down the uncombed

curls, "sister will be careful and not hurt her again;" and after that wise speech went back to finish shaving, with tepid water.

But as he trod the stairs he could not fail to hear loud-voiced Janet's exclamation, whatever construction he might put upon it.

"Hurt t' bairn? I knaw wha's hurtin' on her! Shoo'll be ta nesh" (tender) "ta luik et suin. Bud I'm nut gangin' te stond it mich longer."

The low whisper in which Janet was answered could, however, reach only the ears for which it was intended. "Never mind, Janet. Perhaps we were as troublesome when we were as little. Children copy the tempers they see, and we can only make her better by being better ourselves. And you know she has a loving little heart. Remember when Martin Pickersgill brought the little starved kitten he had found lying hurt in Tarn Lane, how she cried over its wounds and bruises, and how she feeds and nurses Tippie still."

"Ay, an' plagues kittling as weel. An I seed moor ov her luive an' less ov her

tantrums I'd be gay pleeased. Copy tempers, indeed!" and Janet looked as though her own had been impeached.

CHAPTER XVI.

DORA'S DOING.

PETTED when she should have been rebuked, no wonder Miss Dora continued the day as she began.

The village was dependent for its butcher's meat on a cart which came from Settle twice a week. It was the butcher's day. It was Edith's birthday, Fig-day likewise; and there was a keen March wind blowing from the east; a strong, blusterous wind, that nipped the freshly-budding trees, swept a shower of old leaves from the ivy, and drove back the heavy door with a clang when Edith lifted the latch, almost overturning her with it.

Now, from this said east wind, the wind that blew straight across the churchyard and

into the house, Edith had been especially cautioned by her mother to guard Dora.

But Dora had a will above winds or guardianship; and Dora had decided that it was a delightful day for a walk. Fatherly authority had to be called upon to decide otherwise. Then followed petulance, which sorely tried Edith's self-control. When she would have made entries in her housekeeping book wilful Miss shook the table and spilled the ink. When she brought out her work-basket to repair a rent in a little pinafore, the numbers were picked off her cotton-balls, cotton unwound, and the knitting-pins drawn from a sock in progress. To keep her out of mischief whilst these were replaced a spice-cake was cut into prematurely. With a sigh of resignation, Edith set work aside, and, with a box of ivory letters, made an attempt to give an alphabetical lesson. The little one was deaf to the voice of the charmer; flung A and B into the batter Janet was mixing for a pudding, and clamoured for her doll. The letters were fished from the batter, put back

clean into the box, and the doll dressed. Soon she tired of that, and Edith was called upon to give Tippie a lesson in sitting up to beg, and offer a paw to be shaken, and, truth to tell, the kitten was more docile than the child. Then "lakins," *i.e.*, play-things, were in demand, and Edith, with scissors and paper, manufactured a set of chairs, and dolls to sit thereon.

Barely were these complete when the butcher's cart was heard, and a penny from Edith's pocket-money given as an inducement for Dora to play quietly, and keep out of the cold, whilst their purchases were made.

But no sooner did Dora see Edith and Janet pass the "house" window on their way to the gate than she left her toys, darted out of the open door, bareheaded and barenecked, and, whilst they were engaged with the butcher, ran off as fast as her little legs would carry her round the churchyard corner out of sight.

Until Edith was back in the house, Dora was not missed. There was a hasty run

upstairs, a search from room to room, and then—the truth surmised—the elder sister, reproaching herself for leaving the door open, rushed out in quest of the truant, just as the Grammar School boys came noisily trooping into the lane with their books and parcels of figs.

At the end of the lane the anxious girl stood looking hither and thither with a troubled countenance, her curls and garments blown by the wind, undecided which way to turn, seeing that behind her lay the road to the school-yard and Cateral Hall, and that, whilst Bell Hill rose to her left, Tarn Lane swept past the gable of Ivy Fold to her right, with a curve round the back of Wildman's pasture, past the dwellings of Howson and Ingram, on to the Tarn.

At that moment little William Hartley came racing down the hill fresh from Miss Cragg's school-room. She accosted him, hurriedly.

"Willie, have you seen Dora?"

"Have you lost her?" "What, lost your sister?" came in twofold answer from voices

in the rear, and, barely waiting her affirmative, books and figs were thrust into John Danson's hands, and off went the speakers, Jasper and Martin, in search of the runaway, with others at their heels.

Martin, with an instinctive dread of beck and tarn, at once took to the right; Jasper, another instinct uppermost, paused as he ran to ask "Had she any money?" and, being answered with a nod, made straight for Betty Dyson's spice shop.

Back came he, triumphant, half carrying, half dragging Miss Dora by the arm, whilst William Hartley held the other, she fighting and struggling to release herself.

"I found her at Mother Wellington's, wanting half the shop for a penny," Jasper exclaimed, as Edith met them, and Dora scratched and kicked to get free.

"I say, you're a little tigress!" he cried, with the addendum, "I shall call you Felina in future."

"You sa'ant!" Dora screamed. "I not F'lina—let me go!"

Edith meanwhile thanked her sister's

captor, offered an excuse for her wilfulness, and begged her to "be quiet and come home like a good girl."

"I don't envy you, Miss Edith," observed Jasper, when they had got Dora as far as the gate; "and nobody need envy the man that gets *her* for a wife when she grows up."

"I wouldn't be *your* wife if I was growed up!" snapped out the irate five-year-old damsel, cheeks and eyes aflame, as strong-armed Janet came on the scene and snapped her up.

"I'd tame you, Felina, if you were," the lad of fourteen called after her, and, with a laugh and a nod to Edith, was away after his hilarious fellows.

Janet had a summary method of dealing with the refractory damsel, the efficacy of which was in good repute at the time, and had been well tested on herself, and she did not fail to apply it now, without waiting for Edith's assent.

Dora's roar had stilled to quiet sobbing when Mr. Thorpe, who had been "gather-

ing ideas" in a stiff walk, came in with hurried anxiety, accompanied by Martin, whom he had met in his search for the lost child at the junction of Tarn Lane with the Lancaster highroad.

As they crossed the threshold, the cry broke out afresh, and some time elapsed before any explanation could be given. He had known nothing of Edith's patient forbearance during the morning, nothing of her endeavour to amuse. He blamed her for negligence, and though his reproof was mildly administered, still it *was* reproof, and gained poignancy from the fact that Master Pickersgill was present, and would not know it to be untrue.

Though swelling with a sense of injustice, Edith was too proud to reply, and Martin Pickersgill, self-instructed, "read the rede aright."

Had he not done so, Janet, whose wrath had been gathering all the morning, would have enlightened him. She broke forth not only in defence of Edith, but in protests against spoiling Dora by false indulgence;

and the wrong that was done to both by keeping them from school, winding up with a threat to leave at the next hiring unless Dora was sent to school; a threat which put the widower in a quandary, for Janet was a first-rate cook and a capital manager, and more brusque than ill-tempered.

"Well, well, Janet, I'll see about it," said Mr. Thorpe, hurriedly; and then, observing that Martin was desirous to depart, shook hands, thanked him, and gave the youth an invitation to come and inspect his fossils, at which the black eyes brightened with pleasure.

He next brought a book out of his room, and determined to keep watch over his darling that afternoon for himself. Little was the reading he got over, although Dora was on her best behaviour; at all events he satisfied himself that the duty was irksome, to say the least.

At Edith, however, the child contrived to have another fling before the day was done.

To keep Dora quiet at bedtime during her mother's illness, it had been Edith's

wont to lull her to rest with nursery rhymes and fairy tales. Her store was soon exhausted. The wayward Miss objected to a thrice-told tale, and soon her sister had to draw upon her own imagination, or to dress up facts in fiction's robes.

The Ebbing and Flowing Well was made the theme for many a romantic tale, besides the true one, how a gallant knight named Archibald rescued a fair lady's children from peril there, and was rewarded with the lady's hand. There was generally a fairy of the fountain who had wondrous gifts to bestow, and always a good child set as a foil to the bad one; and no wonder if the *morale* of these narratives pointed to frailties of Dora.

That night, Edith, weary with the harass of the day, hoped to escape without being so taxed, but Dora was imperative, and Edith had to yield. She began, "Once upon a time, there was a little girl——"

Up in bed started Miss Dora. "Now, Edie, I'm not a 'doin to have any 'tories 'bout me!"

"I shall not tell you one at all, if you do not lie down and be good," answered Edith, quite worn out.

"Then, if you don't," said the child, with cunning emphasis, "I'll cry, an' I'll say you slapped me!"

Edith was herself ready to cry, but she sat down again by the bed-side with a weary sigh and related first the old story of "Diamonds and Toads," then "The Yellow Shoestrings," and was half-way up the Bean Stalk with Jack before the remorseless tyrant was content. By that time she was asleep.

Not downstairs did Edith go when once at liberty, but into the cold white room where her mother died, and where in fancy she still saw her form beneath the counterpane.

Down she sank on the floor at the bed-side, poured out her heart and her trouble as if God and her mother could both hear, and prayed for strength to bear and ability to do her duty.

The prayer was no doubt vague and

incoherent, but it came from the heart, and such prayer is audible in heaven without words.

An impatient call from below roused her. She gave a look at the Latin inscription over the fireplace. "Never alone when alone!" she murmured. "Shall I ever understand it? I seem more lonely every day. Poor Allan! he must be lonely too."

In the morning, Dora seemed desirous to atone for her previous wilfulness by clinging to her sister, putting up her pouting lips to be kissed, following her whithersoever she turned, and sitting on a footstool beside her, with her head in the willing lap, when she sat down to sew.

Edith was delighted with these tokens of affection, stroked the shining head, and resented Janet's shrewd remark.

"Moore like, shoo's takken a hoast," by which she meant a cold, "and wants fondlin' hersen. I's gie t'barn soom hot wey t'neet, and shoo'll be a' reet in' th' morn."

Janet's inference was right, but Dora was not.

In the middle of the night, notwithstanding the hot whey, Edith was awakened by that sound which once heard is never to be mistaken.

Croup had Dora's throat in its savage clutch.

To slip from the room and hammer at her father's door was the work of a few seconds; to glide down the dark staircase and arouse the sound sleeper in the box-bed, whilst she groped for the tinder-box, took little longer. Edith had no thought for herself, the cold night, her bare feet, her thin robe; her soul was filled with the danger of her darling Dora, and that only.

Janet was more thoughtful. Snatching flint and steel from fingers trembling too much to use them, she brusquely bade her young mistress "gang and put soom claes on, or theere'd be twee ill insteaad o' one;" and stirring up the peat-raked fire soon had a blaze, with the aid of a long brimstone match or two.

After one hasty look at his child Mr.

Thorpe was speeding to Settle, but, before he was back with Dr. Burrow, Janet's rough remedy—a dose of goose oil—had been forced down an unwilling throat, and the child was in a warm bath.

Dr. Burrow complimented the woman on her promptitude, nevertheless there was a long after-battle for the little one's life, and anxious Edith, utterly regardless of a chill taken by herself, would surrender her precious charge to no one, night or day.

The consequences were easy to foresee. By the time Dora was so far out of danger as to bear removal to the big sofa downstairs, Dr. Burrow had another patient, over whom he shook his head in private, and Archibald Thorpe, whose heart had been stirred by her devotion to Dora, sat in perturbed dismay beside the couch where delirium told so much.

There was no lack of feminine sympathy with the distressed widower, no dearth of volunteer nurses professing interest in Miss Earnshaw. To some of these Janet was barely civil, and no sooner

did the doctor breathe the word "fever" than, without taking him into her confidence, she contrived to drop the additional word "smittle," *i.e.*, infectious, so as to drive away the more officious of these "single ladies wi' double moinds," as she called them.

She did not drive away the two lads, Jasper and Martin, who, fearing nought, were constant inquirers; but I rather fancy she made the former her medium for keeping Aunt Statham and Deb at bay.

Somehow or other these two youths had made rapid strides into Archibald Thorpe's good graces since the day of their race after Dora, more especially the West Indian. And it could not be that he took his tone from the little convalescent, who at first treated Jasper Ellis with some disdain, for when a timely present of birds' eggs—which had cost nothing but a holiday scramble—purchased pardon for all offences, and she was extra-gracious to him, the father's preference for Pickersgill underwent no diminution.

And so, one sunny Saturday when April (the fickle month that gave Dora to the world) had melted into May, the large room was fragrant with flowers these two had brought as offerings to another convalescent, and Dora came dancing gleefully in to announce the advent of Edie downstairs. Allan's two young school-fellows pressed forward to help her to the chintz sofa Dora had vacated, just as though they were on a familiar footing in the family. Mr. Thorpe hovered in the background, not less kindly in his greeting, and notwithstanding her pallor Edith's face flushed with animation at the pleasant surprise. Allan's friends both! She was glad to see them there, and said so!

CHAPTER XVII.

VISITORS.

AFTER this, I fancy, more fish found their way from the Ribble to Ivy Fold than to Well Bank; and many a plant and fossil only attainable by lithe young limbs, regardless of rent garments, were brought for Mr. Thorpe's collection. Here Martin bore off the palm, for, though Jasper was equally reckless with regard to his limbs, he was wonderfully careful of anything that cost money, his clothes and books to wit. Many was the stray sixpence that found its way to his pocket from Miss Cragg, when his companions came home from a holiday ramble, with extra work for the mender and the washer;

and he, if not quite so trim and speckless as his grandfather, brought in a minimum of mud, his frill round his neck and not in his pocket, one or both of his shoestrings, and not a tatter or a fray for repair. And did not half-crowns occasionally follow the sixpences when his grandfather received the bills for both ward and grandson, accompanied with Miss Cragg's flattering report that Master Ellis must certainly be taking Mr. Proctor for his model, he was so much more neat and careful than any other boarder; so very polite and obliging.

What became of those sixpences and half-crowns was not very clear. He was never lavish with his coin. Betty Dyson's most toothsome cates never drew a penny from his pocket. From her he bought twine and marbles, and slate pencils, never sweets; the latter he bought from Miss Cragg, and others, with his polite readiness to run hither and thither; the other articles he kept in reserve, to be disposed of at a profit to less provident schoolfellows whose kite-strings ran short, whose pegtops and cob-

nuts were useless without leverage, whose marbles were gone before the game turned in their favour, whose pencil had slipped through the luckless hole in the pocket, and whose back would smart if sum or exercise were not ready in due course.

"Waste not, want not; politeness costs little and gains much," had been the teaching of his mother in those early years when privation, caused by prodigality, had given force to the lesson—and he had certainly bettered the instruction.

His grandfather had told him to make the most of his time at school, he would have to earn his own living in the world, and he *had* made the most of it; had been sedulous at his studies; had been always willing to help idler lads, whose balls and fishing-tackle and what not were consequently at his service, and, having a fund on which the impecunious could draw—always on interest payable on pocket-money days—he was sure of help from the upper class boys when needed; and he had managed it all so cleverly that he was a general

favourite; and if he had been dubbed "Foxey," it was more in admiration of his peculiar talents than otherwise; indeed, he rather regarded it as a compliment.

Oddly enough, he never attempted to conciliate Martin, whose liberal allowance of pocket-money came, so he presumed, from the same purse as his small one, which, to his thinking, was hardly fair.

Probably he thought there was more to be gained by joining the majority in tantalizing the outlandish foreigner, who twiddled with the strings of a guitar; and he did not feel better disposed towards him after Burton and his grandfather spoke their minds so freely, even if he felt constrained to be civil. The rapid advance of Pickersgill at school he attributed wholly to favouritism, and the manifest prepossession of Mr. Thorpe added another drop to the jealousy in his cup; it needed but a like show of partiality from Edith to brim it over.

There can be little doubt that the lonely lot of the handsome West Indian, parentless

like herself, struck a sympathetic chord in Edith's breast, but she was too innately the lady to give it emphasis, to the neglect of his more ordinary companion, and was equally friendly with both.

When Janet lowered the danger flag she had hoisted, and the little housekeeper resumed her nominal rule, and showed her face at church, other visitors, "gentle and simple," came to Ivy Fold, the former to munch spice-cake and sip gooseberry wine, the latter to be regaled with home-brewed ale, cake and cheese, and both to offer congratulations.

Amongst the latter, Solomon Bracken, who thanked God Almighty he could "manish to git abaght a bit i'th sunshine wi' t' help o' twee sticks," must be noted, his homely congratulations had such a professional flavour, and were so mingled with lamentations that anybody but himself should have tolled the knell and opened the grave for poor Mrs. Thorpe, he had "counted on deein' his best for shoo sa lang, an' ta think that gaumless Joe Guyer suld

dee 't at last, an' aw through t' ghoast!"

As he recalled the memories of that awful Saturday night which had left such a blank in her young life, Edith shivered, not the less that he dogmatically insisted on the evidence of his "own eyen" that he had seen a disembodied spirit, "a token" of her mother's end, and scouted as an insult to his common sense her suggestions of human agency.

She had been trained to disbelieve in such, but as she listened to his imperfect utterance, and watched from the gate she herself had kindly opened for him, how painfully the old man dragged his limbs along the road, to her lips arose once more the decisive, "I could never forgive mischief so thoughtless and cruel."

She had not left the gate when the postman's long tin horn was heard, warning the village scribes to have their correspondence ready for him to carry away, and to hail him, for he made no pause where he had nothing to deliver; and Settle post-office was a mile away.

Edith had a letter for Allan awaiting the postman; and he had two letters for Ivy Fold, on which the united postal charge was elevenpence. Both were for Mr. Thorpe, and Mr. Thorpe was "over the hills and far away."

Edith turned them over, wondering if either required immediate answer; and Dora insisted on knowing all that outsides could tell. One, apparently from Leeds, was addressed in a minute, cramped hand, which the former at once recognised as that of Honest John, and she knew well that, whatever might be the nature of its business, pithy sayings and moral quotations would fill up all valuable space, as her stepfather had shown her. Nay, a very shower of tiny slips might tumble thence when the wafer was unfastened, scraps of wisdom and terse philosophy cast aside by the receiver, but gathered and treasured in the desk and in the brain of the young girl.

From her Aunt Statham came the other, to set curiosity on the *qui vive*, Mrs. Statham being chary of her correspondence. Dora's

small stock of patience was exhausted long before the pedestrian returned from his three days' ramble, laden with spoil from moss and moorland, rock and cave.

Mrs. Theodora Statham had been right so far as her namesake was concerned. In all Edith's elfin lore the fairy godmothers had gracious gifts to bestow, and the antiquated spinster having had an open hand, it followed that Dora looked upon her oddly-dressed godmother chiefly as a bestower of good things, and wondered if there was half-a-sovereign under the big red seal.

She sat nearly all the third day in her window-seat, with dolly and Tippie in her arms, the latter by this time developed into a finely-marked cat, remarkable alike for intelligence and affection, which could only arise from a grateful sense of care, caresses, and protection, contrasted in memory with previous cruelty and starvation. As proof, it never forgot Martin Pickersgill, and would sit at the back door to watch him pass to and from school, greet him with a quiet "miaw," then walk gravely in, as if a duty

had been done, and, if he entered the house and failed to caress him, would sidle up to him or mount his lap, and, untaught, with uplifted paw draw his hand to his bent head, as an intimation it was there to be stroked. And not alone with him, but with Edith and Dora, in whose arms puss was wont to nestle, with his head on her shoulder, and his paws round her neck, as if he had been human. Indeed, there were human beings within his sphere to whom Tip might have taught a lesson.

A tiny black spot on the end of his white nose, and a habit of putting out the tip of his tongue when purring his satisfaction, had won pussy his *cognomen* which had grown with the handsome tabby from Tip to Tippie.

Mutually caressing, he and his little mistress watched at the recess window, as they had often watched before, Tip's sharper eyes and ears giving the signal to dismount and clamour to have the door opened that she might rush, with puss at her heels, to meet her father at the gate.

"A letter from Aunty 'Tatham" had

been proclaimed in advance, but, to Dora's mortification, John Wilson's communication was opened, read and re-read before the other was even glanced at.

Indeed, in Archibald Thorpe's pre-occupation, it might have been forgotten, but for impatient Dora, who would then have had to forego—not a coin concealed from postal authorities—but a visit to her great-aunt, who had therein sent a formal invitation to both her nieces, and expected an immediate reply. The invitation was equivalent to a command. Even Mr. Thorpe considered he had no right to resent personal indignity to the detriment of Dora, and accordingly a letter, assigning absence as a cause for delay, was written and packed up in brown paper like a parcel, to be sent by the morning coach, and so save a day. Saving postage was no part of Archibald's thought.

John Wilson's letter also contained a sort of invitation. Several friends of education were about to meet in a friendly way at the Leeds Mechanics' Institution, to take into consideration the dense ignorance amongst

the working-class, and to discuss the problem which was to be started by Mr. Polloc, "How to advance the cause of Mechanics' Institutions," and both Mr. Polloc and J. W. were anxious to have Mr. Thorpe amongst them on the occasion. It went on to say that, as neither the class-room nor the library of the Institution was very large, being little more than the garret of a house in Bult's Lane, having an entrance from Park Row, it was probable the meeting would adjourn to the rooms of the Philosophical Society, where their lectures were delivered, and where he hoped to have the pleasure of listening to Mr. Thorpe, and moreover expected that Mr. Edward Baines would once more bring forward his project of the union of Institutes for mutual benefit. He hoped, too, something would be done at the meeting towards the erection of a suitable building. A few words were then adroitly thrown in about Allan, who had become a member of the Leeds M. I., and, as he said, "bade fair to be a worthy member of society also."

In all his life, Mr. Thorpe had never felt himself of importance to anyone but his wife and child. He began to feel he had another place in the scheme of creation, was called into the ranks of the earnest army fighting against ignorance, and so he decided that when he took Edith and Dora to Skipton he might just as well extend his journey, see for himself how Allan was getting on, and attend the meeting as a silent listener.

Mourning does not require much change; but Janet was all in a bustle with suds and starch, box-iron and Italian iron, to make the young ladies superlatively presentable to Deborah and Deborah's somewhat less important mistress.

Precisely seven days after the receipt of the letter, the Skipton coach received the three travellers, Janet hugging the girls, and crying over them before they stepped in, as though they were her own and parting for ever, sending sundry messages to Deb, which were forgotten on the road, and giving the guard as many charges about

their hair-trunk as if they were going alone, and were helpless.

It may be she had floating reminiscences of parcels, brushes, collars, and cravats left behind by their guardian when *he* went journeying on his own account.

She watched the handkerchief waved from the window whilst the coach was in sight, then hurried back with a determination, now the house was clear, to give it the thorough turn-out impossible in the spring, and "mak ivvery inch on it es sweet an' cleean es a new pin afore theah coomed hoam."

Deb was duly at the "Devonshire Arms" to await them, with her arms sedately folded across her waist; and not Deborah only, but Mr. Proctor; he with a face all smiles, she with a countenance of rigid gravity, cast in no smiling mould, but in her dress as speckless and old-fashioned as he, with not a plait or a fold out of place.

Mr. Proctor was there to convey the assurance that Mrs. Statham would be glad to receive the widower, if he had time to

spare for the call, and he was only too well pleased to be able to excuse himself with a good grace. He had not yet overcome her insinuation on the day of the funeral.

Mr. Proctor had given the old lady to understand (wherever he acquired his information) that her "supposition respecting Archibald Thorpe was utterly unfounded, he was the last man in the world to indulge a mercenary motive, in any way or shape."

And Mrs. Statham, with all her oddities, was the last to retain an unfounded prejudice once assured that it was unfounded. She was apt enough to conceive one.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AUNT STATHAM'S SONG.

IT was the first visit the children had paid to Aunt Statham since Dora was a baby. To her, with the parrot, the comfit-box, and the fairy godmother in perspective, it was a vision of delight, and she literally danced along, with her hand in that of Edith, who for her part had much ado to hide her trepidation. Not that she was timid on her own account, but she knew not how soon Dora would get into disgrace, either with Aunt Statham or stolid Deborah.

To Edith, therefore, Mr. Proctor's presence was something beatific, so re-assuring was his elastic step and the cordial welcome

in his voice and smile. They chatted as they went along of Allan, of her friends at Well Bank, of his grandson and his ward, until all that was formidable in anticipation was forgotten. Had Deborah alone met them, the young girl would have presented a very different countenance to the old lady on their arrival, and it is more than probable their reception would have been less gracious in consequence.

As it was, by the time Dora, who ran in first with expanded arms, had got over her hugging and kissing, Mrs. Statham was ready for the less demonstrative embrace of the elder grand-niece, and to meet her pleasant smile with one as encouraging.

"I am glad to see you, my dears. I hope you will consider yourselves welcome, and make yourselves at home," said she, the deep frill of her mob-cap shaking not with the breeze from the open window, but the earnestness of her speech.

Her voice was, however, almost drowned in the shrill echo from her grey parrot, wonderfully glib with its lesson.

"Glad to see you, my dears! Make yourselves at home! Heartily welcome, heartily welcome! Kiss Poll, pretty Poll!"

Away with a rush went Dora to return the greeting of her old acquaintance, who had made more than one visit to Settle. Ere she was half way across the large room to his cage in the embayed front, she stumbled over something unseen, and fell sprawling her whole length on the sad-coloured Brussels carpet.

Of course there was an instantaneous roar.

"Oh! Fido, Fido, what have you done?" exclaimed Fido's mistress, with fan uplifted in semi-rebuke.

"I'm afraid you have hurt the carpet, Miss Dora," said Mr. Proctor, as he raised the fallen damsel.

"Don't cry, dear," entreated Edith. "It was not poor Fido's fault," and out came her handkerchief to wipe away tears.

"Not much damage done either to the beast or bairn," grimly suggested Deb, who had been waiting stiffly apart until the girls

were ready to be shown to their rooms.

Dora, not much hurt, was twinkling away her tears at Mr. Proctor's suggestion, her mouth hesitating between a sob and a smile. At that instant her eye sought the offending Fido. With a shriek, up went her hands; in her fright she started back, almost overturning Polly and her cage. This time she was not so easily stilled.

Fido was a large land tortoise, and not a poodle!

Dora's eyes dilated with horror as she saw the silent monster slowly put forth the snake-like head he had retracted, and crawl along the floor towards her aunt, across whose wrinkled features grave displeasure was creeping as silently, her trembling hand meanwhile going down to caress the head of her pet, "poor Fido!"

With a stride Deborah reached the terrified Dora, caught her by the arm, and simply saying, "Come, it's time your things were off," nodded to Edith to follow, and drew the little one from the room.

When they had mounted the stairs and

reached the quaintly old-fashioned chamber assigned to them, where the spindly chairs had worsted-work seats, where amber-lined netted curtains draped both the windows and spindly four-post bed, where the very floor was covered with broadcloth, overlaid with faded pansies and nasturtiums of tinted cloth, in a straggling device that would have gladdened the hearts of modern mediæval needleworkers, then, and not till then, did Deborah open her lips again, and it was with a caution.

"Ye'd best, Miss Edith, make th' little one understand that yon dumb beastie Fido won't harm her. But it may happen harm *both* of ye, if she don't take kindly to her aunt's pets. So mind!"

A motion or two of hand and head to indicate that the open drawers of an oaken bureau were ready for the contents of the uncorded hair trunk, and that there were dress pegs in a corner closet, and Deborah, always sparing of words, was gone.

Edith's thanks for the timely hint were uttered in tones which, clearly as words,

conveyed her sudden discovery that Deborah was not as grim as she looked, and, with the discovery, long instilled repulsion faded like a mist. In future, Deborah was to be trusted, not feared.

Before they went back, clothes had been put away in order, and Dora had been schooled to regard the tortoise as a wonderful creature, Robinson Crusoe having been pressed into the service; but Dora's first repugnance was not to be so easily conquered. Luckily, Mr. Proctor was not gone when Edith led Dora into the room where her aunt sat in somewhat ruffled state, and he, seeing the blue eyes in quest of the monster, carried the child to the window, where under cover of conversation with Poll, who reiterated her welcome, he contrived to screen her from the keen grey optics of her aunt, leaving Fido full in view. When he fancied her familiar with the unwieldly form of the peculiar pet, he asked, in his airy manner, if she had ever heard of the race between one of Fido's brothers and a pussy called a hare, the tortoise coming in winner,

and so managed that, before he took leave, he had induced her to examine Fido's wonderful armour, and even to put out her little soft hand to feel how hard it was.

That danger was past. The fluttering fan was stilled, the snuff-spoon allowed to rest in its golden case, the puckered lines on Mrs. Statham's face smoothed into graciousness, and Edith was inexpressibly grateful to the old gentleman.

The room in which they ordinarily sat contained, besides the parrot cage and its noisy inmate, an old-fashioned harpsichord, with music and song books to suit. There was also a fine harp in one corner of the room.

With this latter instrument both sisters were familiar. There was one at Mrs. Cragg's. But the curiosity of irrepressible Dora led her to an examination of the harpsichord, and finally to inquiries concerning its name and use, in a stage whisper, to Edith.

The whisper had been overheard. In excess of affable condescension, Mrs. Statham rose from her arm-chair, took her seat in

front of the key-board, yellow with age, and ran her withered fingers over it. The sound, it could scarcely be called music, did not seem to satisfy Dora, but presently the old lady, who had kept a once melodious voice in marvellous preservation, broke out into snatches of song, and gave them one or two Jacobite strains with much spirit, considering her age.

The girls were delighted, and so was she. She had discovered a way to amuse them, and they to gratify her; she was always willing to oblige with a song, and never better pleased than when she caught either of them humming snatches of her melodies.

Dora was soon at home even with the tortoise. At first she only watched him crawl in and out through the open glass door at the back, appear and disappear amongst the garden shrubs, but, after a while she grew bold enough to take a seat upon his back for a ride on the well-kept walks. And then Aunt Statham, in the plenitude of her satisfaction, called Deborah as a spectator.

In spite of her withered features, Mrs. Statham was not infirm. It was sunny weather, and every morning found her stepping out of doors to take the air and exhibit her grandnieces, of whom she was not a little proud, introduced them with much precision as "Miss Earnshaw" and "Miss Theodora Thorpe," to the friends, married and single, she called upon or met. There were delightful walks around Skipton, and —always with Deborah in attendance—these were traversed, and then, treat of treats to Edith, permission was obtained to explore the Castle, Mr. Proctor being called upon as cicerone. Mr. Proctor's "two plagues," as he playfully dubbed his ward and grandson, were then in Skipton for their midsummer holidays, and of the favoured party.

Josiah Proctor had the history of the place and people at his finger ends, from the time when Willian the Norman granted it to his follower De Romille, to its brief possession by the luckless Piers Gaveston, through the fierce battering it underwent at

the hands of the Cromwellians during its three years' siege, and its final restorations by the noble lady, Ann Clifford, whose motto "Desormais" is stamped in stone above the chief gateway, and who holds high place in history as "the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in," and, as they traversed long stone passages and staircases between the one large octagonal tower and the numerous old round ones, scanned monumental brasses and tombs, he had ample space to discourse on salient points of character, and of the changes wrought by time in families.

"I'se tired," said little Dora, long before they stood outside the gate again, where Mr. Proctor, who had been silently watching the animated faces of Edith and Martin, paused once more to impress the motto "Desormais" upon the latter, as that of a grand woman who had done a great work.

"It must have cost a lot to build all those tiresome passages and towers," remarked Jasper. "I wonder where she got so much money to waste!"

"Waste!" was Edith's sole response. She had been revelling in the "Sicilian Romance," "The Mysteries of Udolpho," "The Old English Baron," and other volumes of a like nature contained in her aunt's book-case. Skipton Castle had carried her back to times remote, and made them living realities to her.

"Waste!" echoed Martin. "I don't call it waste to build up the ruined home of one's father, and his people before him. And only think what a monument she has built for herself!" he exclaimed, the solidity of the massive building having impressed him greatly.

"Then take care you build up your father's house when you come into your fortune, Donna Martini," said Jasper, with a curl of the lip.

"I hope he *will*," put in the lawyer, with quiet emphasis.

"It would not take much of a fortune to build that up," remarked the West Indian. "You should see how soon the houses are built up in Jamaica after a hurricane. They

are card houses compared with that," and a backward glance pointed the words; then in an undertone to Jasper only, "But don't you call me Donna Martini again, or you will find I shall knock *your* house down pretty quickly."

He looked as if he meant it, and, being in his grandfather's presence, Jasper thought silence his best shield.

Tea was waiting for them all at Mrs. Statham's. The parrot screamed its loudest welcome, and Edith carried away the tippet and bonnet of weary little Dora, too fatigued to walk upstairs herself. It was a substantial tea, with cakes and sweets, ham and tongue, the freshest of salads, and appetites ready to enjoy. Mrs. Statham was in her most chatty mood, and, when tea was over, proposed they should "have a song all round," and that Mr. Proctor should lead off. He, having Dora in his mind, after a little preliminary clearing of his throat, began, with infinite drollery, "A frog he would a-wooing go!" at which little Miss was highly amused.

Then Mrs. Statham, trifling with her fan, declared her inability to select her own song, and left the choice to the company.

Dora at once put forward a suggestion that her aunt should play the harp for them.

"Nay, dear, my fingers are now too old for that," she answered, patting her fair head, and putting her comfit box in the child's hand. "The harp will have to wait for little fingers to grow big; and now, what shall I sing?" and, closing her fan, complacently seated herself at the harpsichord, and struck a few notes with every suspicious line smoothed out of her features.

Edith had been turning over an old music-book from the bottom of a pile.

"Oh, aunt, here is such a sweet song! Can you sing this, 'Mary's Dream'?" and she placed the book in front of the player.

The change was instantaneous. The thin hands wandering over the yellow keys were arrested, then dropped, then clenched as the mittened arms grew rigid, the strained eyes closed, and the face, from which every particle of colour faded, became convulsed.

Edith shrieked, and caught her aunt as she was falling, Martin coming to her aid. Dora screamed her loudest.

There was a rush and a commotion. Deborah was in the room before she could be called.

Mr. Proctor helped the handmaid to bear her mistress to a sofa, discomposing her head-gear thereby. Hartshorn, kept at hand, was applied to the pinched nostrils of the sharply-defined nose, and while Poll cried "What's the matter? what's the matter?" Deborah demanded stiffly what had been said or done to "make the mistress go off," as she called it.

"Nothing," said Edith, white and aghast.

Mr. Proctor whispered something to Deborah.

"Nothing?" cried Deb, with more emotion than Edith had thought she could display. "Why, if t' lass had gone th' world over for something worse, she'd not have found it. But it's her own fault. I shall tak' th' book away! Hush-sh! She's coming round."

"Stand back, all of you, out of sight!" And, at Mr. Proctor's command, the young people stepped back, Dora sobbing, all more or less awed, until Poll's solemn echo of Deborah's "Hush-sh!" changed Jasper's mood to mirth, and he had much ado to keep his face in order during the silence which followed.

Soon they overheard, in tones of acute pain, "Cruel! cruel! How could she? Oh! Deb, I saw him, I saw him!" The old woman burst into a flood of passionate tears on Deborah's sustaining shoulder, and, in the motion, lost her head-dress altogether, leaving a closely-cropped, white crown exposed.

The outburst was but momentary. The grief-bowed head was raised, and, through the tear-blurred eyes, the aged woman saw reflected in a mirror before her, Jasper, with one hand over his mouth, as if to hold his laughter in, grimacing and gesticulating with his whole body, while his other hand pointed to the fallen wig and the grey hair, which should have been sacred in its owner's sorrow.

One passion overmastered another. With vehemence hardly tempered by her late attack, she—pointing in her wrath to the mirror—cried,

"Out with the wretched imp! Out with him, I say!"

And out he went, with Josiah Proctor's hand upon his shoulder, to receive as sound a drubbing as ever was administered by Howson's cane.

That was not all. As Martin retreated also, and Dora, Edith lost what followed in the sound of footsteps and closing doors. It seemed as if Deborah was remonstrating with her mistress.

"The book should have been put away lang syne; how was th' poor lass to know?"

"Pack them off, I say, pack them off!" was the only answer, and Edith stayed to hear no more.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SPIRIT OF POESY AND THE SPIRIT OF MISCHIEF.

SURE enough when Edith arose next morning their trunk was packed, and the owners of the trunk were "packed off" with it in the afternoon coach, with no further leave-taking than could be transmitted through Deborah, Mrs. Statham being invisible. She had been closeted with Mr. Proctor best part of the day, another last will and testament being on the tapis. Most certainly she was a profitable client.

The lawyer's office occupied the ground-floor of his dwelling-house within hail of the Market-place, and thither Deborah had been despatched as soon as Mrs. Statham was up

and dressed. On the step she encountered Simon Postlethwaite, sober, dry, and caustic, as his master was vivacious; and if Deborah had a friend besides her mistress, the formal clerk was the one.

She delivered the message of her mistress with a supplement of her own, whereupon the clerk took his way to the "Devonshire Arms," and booked "two insides" for the Giggleswick coach, feeling as well paid with Deborah Gill's thanks as Lawyer Proctor with Mrs. Statham's guineas, Simon holding the grave handmaiden, who moved like a machine, in no small reverence.

He moreover wrote out a clerkly label for the small hair trunk, and, when the two sisters, thus ignominiously "packed off," reached the inn under Deborah's guardianship, their box going on ahead on the gardener's shoulders, Simon Postlethwaite was there to meet them, to tender his humble services as protector on their journey, supposing they were at all timid, he having a dispensation from his master to that effect.

Edith thanked him, but declined. Her

proud spirit was rebelling against her aunt's caprice and injustice; she would much prefer travelling alone than with a strange man who would have to be talked with.

"Miss Earnshaw," said Deborah, with impressive gravity, as the coach was being horsed, "you will find something at the bottom of your box. Keep it out of your aunt's sight. It always makes her ill. She will come round some day. And, *mind!* never let *her* hear of the ghost as came afore your dear mother departed."

As gravely, Deborah shook hands, then stood with arms folded across her waist to watch them off. Simon Postlethwaite had given the guard charge of "box and bairns," and it may be the word he exchanged with one of the other inside passengers was also in their behoof.

When they were fairly off, Edith found a small reticule basket in Dora's hands filled with cakes and strawberries, but she did not accredit Mrs. Statham with the attention.

That might have been a very sad and thoughtful ride for Edith, but for a duty at

hand, and Simon Postlethwaite's precaution. She was inclined to dwell upon her own loneliness, and, under the shade of her great-aunt's displeasure, her musings might have become morbid, had she been allowed to indulge them.

Dora, however, did not leave her much time for reverie. She had no talent for sitting still, and in a very short time became restless. She would have liked to stand at the coach window and look out, but the long legs of the opposite traveller were in the way, and Edith was at first afraid the fidgety little one would incommode him.

He was a young man some twenty years of age, and six feet in height, giving promise of a stalwart and muscular frame in maturer life. His face had the same massive outline, and was lit with an intelligent eye that looked as if it could kindle into enthusiasm. His apparel was of homely texture, but in colour and cut proclaimed the Quaker, even if his speech and broad-brimmed hat had not done so.

He speedily relieved Edith's fears for his

discomfort, and, taking Dora on his knee, said pleasantly that he would "make room for both, and would gratify the little bairn," who soon began, as was her wont, to ply him with questions fast and thick.

So long as these referred to objects along the road, Edith let her run on, but when little miss drifted into personalities, and required to know the stranger's name, whence he came, and whither he was going, she thought it quite time to interfere, and give her a quiet lesson in politeness, at which Dora was inclined to pout.

The young man only seemed the more amused, and soon they were possessed of the fact that his name was Thomas Lister, that he came from Barnsley, was the son of a farmer and gardener, had gone to a great school at Ackworth, was going to Settle, going to see John Tatham, had a garden of his own, but only cultivated flowers of poesy.

Equally communicative was Dora, exchanging confidence for confidence. At the mention of John Tatham Edith claimed

acquaintance with the worthy scientific Quaker, and Dora volunteered the information that their frocks came from his shop. But, when he spoke of cultivating "flowers of poesy," Dora was lost in perplexity, and Edith in a mist of sublime ecstasy.

A poet! Could it really be her favoured lot to meet a living poet?

Dora soon settled the point. "Flowers of poesy! You mean 'pecimens. Father brings home 'pecimens."

Edith explained that Mr. Thorpe amused himself with botany and geology.

"Then I may meet thy father at John Tatham's some day, for he and I study the book of nature from the same leaves?"

The last word alone caught Dora's comprehension.

"Leaves—'pecimens? Father don't call 'pecimens flowers of poesy!"

At this juncture the coach stopped, and a farmer, his wife, and son, who had occupied the other seats, were put down.

As they alighted, the Quaker smiled and, in language better adapted to Dora's

capacity, explained that he, too, collected specimens of plants and fossils, but the "flowers of poesy" were of another order. And in elucidation, with all the enthusiasm of a young poet who had chanced on good listeners, he favoured them with specimens, not only of his own versification, but of other and better known bards. He started, just to amuse the child, with Sonthey's "Cataract of Lodore," and drifted to the rest, having a long spell with Ebenezer Elliot.

Dora's ear was caught with the rhyming jingle, the rhythmic flow, the sonorous voice, but as with a lullaby, and soon her eyelids closed, and her cottage bonnet was crushing against the collarless drab coat.

But Edith seemed to have entered upon a world of enchantment. Enthusiasm is as contagious as fever to kindred souls. Her dark hazel eye glowed as she listened, and though the voice of Yorkshire breathed in every cadence and inflection, she, "native and to the manner born," heard only the utterance of divine poesy. A new spirit

seemed to waken within her. There was no such living fire in the poetry of Miss Cragg's class-room.

Would she ever look at a waterfall again without thinking of Lodore? How she wondered if it were like Stainforth Foss, or Scalebar!

Aunt Statham, Deborah, Janet, all were forgotten, and, when some timid query of her own elicited that Thomas Lister had verses in print when a boy ten years old, her thoughts went wandering into dream-land very far.

The coach, lurching in a deep rut, wakened Dora to a remembrance of the cakes and strawberries, putting poetry and dreams to flight. It was almost time; they were drawing near to Settle.

At the "Golden Lion" Thomas Lister got out, and bade them good day, not, however, before he had expressed his satisfaction that there had not been room for him on the roof of the coach, and his hope to meet with his young friend again, a hope reciprocated.

"Aunt Statham little fancies what a pleasant journey we have had," thought Edith, forgetting how she had "talked to a strange man."

Janet's surprise was only equalled by her displeasure, and that was only exceeded by her delight to have them at "hoam agaen;" but nothing would persuade her that Deborah was not "at boddom on it all."

Tippie frisked about them, a poor meagre shadow of his own self, Janet's explanation being that "t' cat had fair pined efter 'em." She had been "too thrang i' gettin' th' place redd up t' sit an' laak wi' a cat."

And truly the house was "in apple-pie order;" she could not have had much time to play with cats.

Rather too much in "apple-pie order." She had invaded Archibald Thorpe's sanctum with brush, pail, and duster, and on his return was he not wrathful thereat? The dust *she* had kicked up was nothing to it! Even his annoyance at Mrs. Statham's vagaries was thrown into the shade.

What mischief she had done it was im-

possible to say, even he did not realise it all at once. He could only cry out, "Order, woman; you have put everything into disorder; you do not know the very meaning of the word. I cannot find a thing I want. Newton's dog, Diamond, was not more destructive to his master's papers than you have been to mine. Heaven save the student and collector from a tidy woman and her duster!" and he sat down in a chair by the window, gazing woefully on the new classification of papers, stones, and plants by Janet's method.

A soft hand touched his square shoulder.

"Is your loss irreparable, father? Diamond destroyed the labour of years. Is Janet more to blame than the dog? She was equally unconscious of the mischief she might do; and I am certain her *intention* was to do you a service."

"Well, well, Edith, perhaps you are right," Mr. Thorpe said, with a heavy sigh. "I forgive her *this* time, but never let her bring brush or duster into this room again."

From the room, disordered by the very spirit of order, Edith turned to the kitchen, where Janet was flouncing about as irate as her master. "Compare me to a *dog!* Ah nivver wor called a *dog* afore, an a' for riddin' aght a heap o' clarty rubbidge!" she was muttering, angrily. "He may cleean it aght hissen next time, fur Janet. Dog, indeed!" And Edith found it a much more difficult task to soothe the wounded pride of the domestic who had done the unconscious wrong, than the temper of the scientific inquirer who had realised at a glance what tidiness had done for him. Possibly Janet had upon her conscience sundry stones and other "litter" cast into the midden; and was less placable in consequence.

Edith had, however, the blessed power of throwing oil on troubled waters. Janet toned down, and early next morning brought in an apron-full of stones and dead plants, for which she had groped amongst dust and ashes, and laid them silently in the window-seat, in sight of her master.

At the bottom of Edith's hair-trunk lay

the faded music-book, with a slip of paper inserted at the unlucky song. In Deborah's stiff and large hand was written,

"Miss Edith,

"I trust this book with you for safe keeping. I would burn it if I dared. Read the song, and remember it. Some day, when you are older, perhaps your aunt will tell you all about it. If not, I will. Keep the book out of sight.

"Deborah Gill."

Dora happened to be downstairs nursing Tippie, and giving Janet her impressions of Skipton from the castle to the tortoise, or it might not have been easy to comply. Dora's inquisitive eyes were everywhere.

The ballads were old and precious, a future store of wealth to Edith, in whom poetry lay dormant like gold in quartz. Yet had she the resolution to put the book away in a sure place? Nay, she had no care to proceed when she had gone through John Lowe's pathetic old ballad—

MARY'S DREAM.

"The moon had climbed the highest hill
Which rises o'er the source of Dee,
And from the eastern summit shed
Her silver light on tower and tree,
When Mary laid her down to rest
Her thoughts on Sandy far at sea;
When, soft and low, a voice was heard
Saying, 'Mary, weep no more for me!'

"She from her pillow gently raised
Her head, to see who there might be,
And saw young Sandy, shivering, stand
With visage pale and hollow e'e:
'O, Mary dear, cold is my clay,
It lies beneath a stormy sea.
Far, far from thee, I sleep in death;
So, Mary, weep no more for me.

"'Three stormy nights and stormy days
We tossed upon the raging main,
And long we strove our bark to save,
But all our striving was in vain.
E'en then, when horror chilled my blood,
My heart was filled with love for thee;
The storm is past, and I at rest,
So, Mary, weep no more for me!

"'O, maiden dear, thyself prepare;
We soon shall meet upon that shore
Where love is free from doubt and care,
And thou and I shall part no more!'

Loud crowed the cock, the shadow fled,
No more of Sandy could she see ;
But soft the passing spirit said,
'Sweet Mary, weep no more for me !' "

Edith closed the book with a saddened feeling, as if she had been intruding into her aunt's heart and history. How little could she foresee the circumstances under which both would be unfolded !

Edith went back to school, and Dora with her, and never was child so watched, so tended, so assiduously guarded from sun and shower, from draughts and discomforts, as was she. Her wants, her requirements, were paramount ; so imperceptibly were the thousand little sacrifices made to her caprices that Edith ceased to perceive the sacrifice. There was a dying charge ever in her mind to influence her action, though age and experience were too immature to suggest its probable tendency.

For some few days the companionship of other little misses made the change a pleasurable one, but no sooner did the newness wear away than Dora began to chafe under

the restraint, and to break out into utter rebellion. Not even Miss Vasey could induce her to look at the letters on her battledore (a leafless book of folded card, on which the alphabets were printed large for little learners), or to repeat them after her. She snatched the battledore from her kind teacher's hand, and threw it across the room, to the dismay of the assembled school. Equally refractory was she over her early lessons in sewing, and gentle Ann Vasey was in despair.

Then Miss Cragg took her in hand, and Miss Cragg's will was stronger than Dora's.

It was some time, however, before discipline prevailed. The indulgent father at home, who could see no fault in his loving little darling, would grant anything so long as he was not disturbed.

On any pretence, or no pretence, Miss Dora could buy holidays with kisses, and a holiday for Dora meant a game of romps, or a ramble in the fields, or up Ribblesdale, and consequently meant also so much time wasted for Edith, whose anxiety to recover

lost ground by close attention to study was apparently of no moment.

Mrs. Cragg and Miss Cragg both called at Ivy Fold to remonstrate with the widower, but he pleaded the child's delicacy of constitution, her affectionate nature, her want of a mother as so many reasons for indulgence, and could not see how an occasional holiday could affect Edith, save for the better.

He was not always at home, fortunately, and Janet was apt to whip the demurrer up in her strong arms, and, in spite of kicks and scratches, bear her off up the village.

Sometimes the boys bound to the Grammar School would meet them by the way, when Jasper never failed to salute her as "Felina," and offer to "cut her claws," and not infrequently would Thomas Clapham rub his hands in glee as he saw the fight for mastery between the woman and child. More than once he had called across the road, "Shall I come and gobble up the naughty bairn?" with a display of ogreish grimaces, certain to frighten her to obedience.

It chanced on one of Dora's refractory days, when Edith herself had been the patient victim, Thomas Clapham, standing at the vicarage gate, had been a witness of the ineffectual coaxing and pleading the child required. In the afternoon, about four o'clock, he loitered near the Bank Well to watch for the coming of the day-pupils with their bags and books.

Miss Dora was always one of the earliest to break loose. As she danced up the narrow lane he darted upon her, with a grin on his apish face, caught her in his bony arms, and ran up the road as fast as his long, thin legs would carry him, she shrieking her loudest. On he went for several hundred yards before he quitted the road in search of a tree to suit his purpose, then, climbing like a cat, he placed her between a fork of the main branches, and, bidding her hold on, left her there, with an intimation that that was the way he cured bad tempers.

In extremity of horror she clung to the tree, afraid to fall, afraid to cry out, afraid

lest he should leave her there to starve, and foxes or bears come and eat her up. Anyway, the prospect was dolorous.

He was out of sight, there was no one there. Minutes seemed wofully long. Presently she began to sob. Then her little arms grew tired, and, fearing to lose her hold, she cried out, piteously, "Oh, Edie, Dora *will* be good, Dora *will* be good!"

She could not see Edith running distractedly hither and thither in search of her, with a conscience full of self-accusation for losing sight of the child. But she cried to Edith, nevertheless.

After a time, a terrible time to her, her tormentor appeared at the foot of the tree, capering and making antics, but not offering to release her. She began to identify Thomas Clapham with a legion of goblins and evil genii, her notions of either being somewhat crude.

At length, when his innate spirit of mischief was satisfied, and he concluded she had been fairly punished, he opened a parley, the end of which was a vague threat

of horrors in store for disobedience, and on her part a ready promise of future good behaviour.

Thereupon he went up the tree, like a monkey, and descended with Dora to terra-firma, set her on her feet in the middle of the road, and bade her "be off." He laughed until his sides ached as he watched her dash down the hill; then followed to keep her in view, talking to himself all the way, as was his wont.

Miss Dora's fright was not soon forgotten. She was thenceforth more amenable to control, a reminder of Mr. Thomas Clapham being an unfailing specific for obstinacy.

Of course Mr. Thorpe was indignant, and called at the vicarage to demand an explanation and an apology, with some reference to a horsewhip.

He got the explanation; for an apology was told to "be thankful," and was reminded that his interlocutor's arm and horsewhip were both as long and strong as his own.

CHAPTER XX.

A MIDNIGHT EXCURSION.

IT has been said that Martin and Jasper had found favour in the sight of Archibald Thorpe, but just as the former was the senior in years and grew in stature more rapidly than his fellow, so did he o'ertop the other in Mr. Thorpe's estimation. Not that he took more pains to earn that good-will. One was as ready as the other to rise with the lark on a holiday morning, and tramp with him over moorland and mountain, to hammer away at rocks, dig up roots, pare off moss and lichen, or help to carry home the spoil. But even Mr. Thorpe could discern that the one had his heart in these expeditions, the other feigned an interest he did not feel. It mat-

tered not to Martin whether they rambled to Ingleton or Attermire, to Malham or even to Ingleborough ; he was gaining health and strength and information with every step ; the languor and listlessness of the West Indies had passed away ; he trod the heather or the crag with a firm, free step and a kindling cheek, and was quick to learn what the elder was proud to teach.

It was not he who strayed away to chase the sheep from their pasture on the scant herbage above the scars, and occasionally got into difficulties with the angry rams, whilst Archibald Thorpe, low on his knees, bent over and measured the curious holes in the limestone pavement, and speculated on their ancient use and origin. It was not he who talked of "weeds" when the botanist discovered some common plant, with minute efflorescence in an unknown habitat. It was not he who ruthlessly shied a group of ecrinities or quartz crystals at an anxious peewit, and deprecated blame with the easy declaration "there were lots to be had where those came from."

Something beyond either plants or fossils must have lain at the bottom of this reticent man's liking for the dark-complexioned youth who knew nothing of his pedigree, so little of his immediate kith and kin; who could only tell that his mother's name was Inez, and she of Spanish blood, and that his father, the indigo-planter, Lawrence Pickersgill, was an Englishman. Certainly something, or Archibald Thorpe had never been stirred to question him so closely, or to resolve he would some day ask Mr. Proctor what he knew of Martin's relatives, even though the absent man forgot, and the "some day" never came.

Absent indeed, for he never thought of future possibilities when, at the close of these holiday excursions, he carried the boys home with him to Ivy Fold for early supper; or when, the meal over, he would spread out his earthy collections of roots and stones on the polished parlour table, to the sore annoyance of Janet, or seated, well contented, in his chintz-covered arm-chair, with his back to the recess, would

cross his long limbs and listen, whilst Martin and Edith practised with voice and piano—to which sometimes the guitar was added—the duets Mr. Pulman, their music-master, set them at school, calmly looking on while Jasper—whose education did not include music, and to whom nature had denied a voice—found an outlet for his boyish jealousy in tantalizing Tippie, which was equivalent to tantalizing Dora; or, to show his indifference, built card-houses for the child, or with the same cards initiated her into the sublime mysteries of beggar-my-neighbour, his grandfather's prohibition notwithstanding. Absent, indeed! But why should a man, pondering the occult secrets of creation, be expected to note the actions or development of young people, even though one should be his own? The fossilized past had a more intelligent voice for him than had the human present.

It is true he had been awakened to the intellectual needs of the people at large, and was filled with the importance of the mission he had undertaken, to carry the

stores of his information to the uneducated in dark corners of the county; but, intent on the enlightenment of the masses, his mental vision had so wide and comprehensive a range, it is small wonder the inconsiderable individuals on his own hearthstone were overlooked.

Matters went on at Well Bank pretty much in the same round. Miss Cragg, the Minerva of the establishment, Mrs. Cragg, the Penelope, her busy fingers darting the swift hook through the muslin in the tambour-frame, or plying netting or knitting-needles even when drawn into the garden and the sunshine by ever-ready hands. Poonah-painting and velvet-painting, hemming, seaming, and backstitching, with the Reading-made-easy and Mavor, found occupation for Miss Vasey in the school-room—out of it her duties were multifarious.

Apple-Tree Hall kept up its repute as a focus for mischief, the lads varied their lessons with gallant or elfish tricks on the girls, got into and out of quarrels and scrapes, stole the fruit, smoked surreptitious pipes,

frightened the maids and Mother Wellington with her own rip-raps and crackers, and performed sundry exploits for which there is no space in this chronicle; but throughout it all Jasper kept in favour with Miss Cragg. When Martin would leave a scrap of his surtout fluttering on the top of the tallest tree in the parish, Jasper would come home, neat and trim; then he had an eye like a hawk for stray pins, needles, buttons, tacks, or twine, and was not beneath stooping to pick them up in the house or on the road. If a pin was wanted there was always a collection under the collar of Jasper's jacket; if a parcel or a jar needed tying he was sure to have a ball of scrap twine in his pocket, so very careful was he, and this frugality of his commended itself to Miss Cragg.

That year wore itself out, and another was on the wane before Martin had his innings.

It chanced that some of the Clapham lads conveyed to the Grammar School intelligence that a tribe of gipsies had encamped

on Clapham Common. Here was food for adventure! A conclave, with Burton at its head (assembled in Apple-Tree Hall, when all good folk were supposed to be abed), decided on a moonlight visit to the encampment the following night, and Martin, whose imagination had been excited by gipsy tales, and who had more than once been likened to a Spanish *gitano,* consented to be of the party. Within the last few months he had strengthened considerably, was no longer afraid of exposure to the night air, or a midnight ramble; besides, was it not September, ripe and mellow as its fruits?

The "Ebb-and-Flow" was appointed as a general rendezvous, the hour for starting eleven, by the church clock. Six or seven miles lay between them and Clapham Common. They must be off in good time if they meant to have a fair gossip with the gipsies, yet must they wait until there was small chance of meeting tell-tale stragglers by the way.

It yet wanted some ten or fifteen minutes to eleven when Martin was awakened by a

slight noise, which he took to mean Burton and Jasper at his door. He had laid his clothes ready overnight, with his shoes tied together for slinging round his neck, whilst he descended the pear-tree ladder. Quickly slipping on socks and trousers, he had his waistcoat in his hand, when a sort of stifled groan met his ear, and made him pause. It was followed by a crash as of glass, and another suppressed moan.

He was fully awake now. The sound came from the next chamber, where Miss Cragg slept.

In another minute he was tapping at her door, but a moan was the only distinguishable answer, and he ventured to raise the latch and speak through the slightly-opened door.

"Are you ill, Miss Cragg? Can I do anything for you?"

"Oh-h! my face is aching dreadfully. My bottle and glass are both gone. I dropped them in a sudden spasm. Oh! what shall I do?" she gasped rather than said.

"Wait awhile, I'll soon get you some more," cried Martin, and he was gone, leaving her in pain, and in perplexity as to his meaning.

Had not her head been muffled in a woollen shawl, she might have heard other footsteps pass her door, and been in greater perplexity.

Martin had known at once that her "bottle" meant the specific of Dr. Burrow for face-ache, or as we call it now neuralgia, and he had his vest and jacket on, his window opened, and was down the great pear-tree and putting on his boots in less than three minutes.

He had bridled Punch and led him from his stable as the church clock was striking, and under cover of the sound his companions joined him.

"Off to Dr. Burrow's and not with us?" was the general exclamation when he had explained.

"I say now, that's not fair, to sneak off that way!" cried Jasper, as Martin opened

the gate and was mounting the bare-backed pony.

"I'm not sneaking off. I'll be after you and overtake you before you are two miles away. Or you can wait for me at the 'Ebb-and-Flow.' I cannot let Miss Cragg suffer if I can help it. It would spoil all my pleasure," and off he went as fast as Punch's shanks would permit, leaving Jasper to sneer at his leisure and to "go gipsying" without him.

But Martin did *not* follow

He reached Lazy Corner, pulled the night bell—the doctor always kept a night-lamp burning—and before long was speeding back with a fresh bottle of the infallible remedy.

Punch was turned loose in his paddock, and up the tree, bottle in pocket, went Martin. The clatter of Punch's hoofs on the paved yard had roused Ann Vasey as they went. Her listening ears caught her cousin's moans. There was a light burning in Miss Cragg's room when he handed in the

bottle, and an explanation was required as to his means of exit when doors were locked and barred.

The specific did its duty, and Miss Cragg must have been grateful, but there was no going off for Martin.

Ann Vasey remained with her cousin so long as pain was paramount; and, not being inclined for after-sleep, was awake to the fact that there were footsteps in the house, before it was the servants' hour to rise.

The spirited little woman was out on the landing to confront the supposed robbers without a moment's hesitation. She confronted, not thieves, but midnight excursionists who had fallen among thieves, and were somewhat airy in their apparel.

Their trip had scarcely been as satisfactory in fact as in anticipation, although they *had* seen the gipsies; since those interesting nomads had obligingly relieved them, not only of the coin in their pockets, but of the pockets likewise, and that without the preliminary of severance from outer broadcloth.

There was immediate work for the tailor, and work for gibing tongues, schoolfellows being as ready with banter as croaking Solomon Bracken with his after-date wisdom. Thomas Clapham was in ecstasies, and in face of his derision Mrs. Cragg's homily was as nothing.

There was an immediate change of apartments. Miss Vasey took possession of the room over the pear-tree.

There was an end to night rambles, an end also to Miss Cragg's tacit hostility to Martin, and she was less ready to open her ears to hints and suggestions in his disfavour.

If she was more gracious, his fellow-boarders were not. They, Burton excepted, resented this desertion and their detection as an act of treachery. Jasper in particular, whose jacket had gone, and with it not only seven or eight shillings hidden in the lining, but the prospect of his grandfather's crown piece at the end of the "half," was bitterly incensed, and resolved to "pay the rascal off." He had been wounded in his most vital part, and such wounds are long

in healing. There was another grudge of longer standing against Martin, and he calculated on paying off both at once.

He did not wait long for his opportunity, and probably without the opportunity Jasper's threat might have been mere vapouring.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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